TOWARDS OPEN FORM :
A STUDY OF PROCESS POETICS IN RELATION TO FOUR LONG POEMS

THE ANATHEMATA BY DAVID JONES
IN MEMORIAM JAMES JOYCE BY HUGH MACDIARMID
PASSAGES BY ROBERT DUNCAN
GUNSLINGER BY EDWARD DORN

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In accordance with the Regulations of the University of Edinburgh I declare that I alone am responsible for the design and execution of the research on which this thesis is based.

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Note: Pages 190-199 have been omitted from the numbering.

ABSTRACT

Four long poems have been selected for study which in one way or another have epic pretensions and yet are distinctively modern. They share a concern for language and an awareness of poetry as a linguistic medium which is involuted and self-conscious, a pre-occupation with myth and history which is reflected in their treatment of time, and an interest in such techniques as fragmentation, collage and open or serial forms.

I seek to place these poems in the wider context of developments in poetic theory since Imagism and the underlying influences of metaphysical systems such as Whitehead's philosophy of process and organism and Heidegger's existential phenomenology.

The first chapter introduces Bergson, T.E. Hulme and discusses the beginnings of Imagism. The second chapter considers Ezra Pound and the development of Vorticism. The third chapter is a study of The Anathemata. The fourth chapter is a study of In Memoriam James Joyce. The fifth chapter traces movements in American poetics from Imagism and Vorticism through Objectivism and W.C. Williams to Charles Olson and Projective Verse. The sixth chapter discusses the relevance of Whitehead and Heidegger. The seventh chapter is a study of Passages. The eighth chapter is a study of Gunslinger.

In conclusion, I find that these attempts to write the long poem, to create epic forms consonant with our times must be founded on a monistic and dynamic view of the universe where art and poetry, while they are intensifications of consciousness, articulations of energy, are nevertheless part of life, historical, not detached nor separable from life. Such a view is opposed to the classical dualism where art and life, form and content, eternity and time are radically separate to the extent that confidence

in the possibility of communication and therefore of community is either shattered or dependent on faith in an arbitrary and unknowable God. The deity in these long poems is discovered in the Logos, in the recurrent moment of creation when the union of matter and spirit is realised in language.

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Introduction

I do go in circles, in fact believe that only if one does, does one finally suck up the vertu in anything.

Charles Olson

The Special View of History.

This thesis originates from a previous study of the poetry and poetics of Charles Olson and their place in the history of modern and post-modern poetry. The study led to the discovery of the wealth of American poetry produced in the fifties, sixties and early seventies, poetry which reaches back from Olson, Duncan and perhaps Ginsberg to Zukofsky, Williams and finally to Pound. One feature of this "New American Poetry" as Don Allen called it in his anthology, The New American Poetry (New York, Evergreen: 1960) was the willingness to entertain the possibility of the long poem, the public poem, the poem including history which might be termed epic.

Poets attempting these ambitious extended works had as their chief examples The Cantos, Paterson, and more recently, itself in process throughout the sixties, Charles Olson's The Maximus Poems. Zukofsky's "A" is also important but not, I am inclined to think, as well known or accessible and therefore less influential.

These poems and the theory of poetics which lie behind them seem to stem historically from the movement in Anglo-American poetry which had its chief outlet in Imagism. I was led back, therefore, to Imagism, behind Pound to T.E. Hulme and the philosopher, Henri Bergson, to the inception of modernism, in an attempt to explain

the wealth of the American inheritance and to discover, if possible, parallel developments in British poetry. This attempt was largely unsuccessful and the two poems, Anathemata by David Jones and In Memoriam James Joyce by Hugh MacDiarmid, considered in the first part of this thesis, must be regarded as atypical. In my view, which I hope to substantiate in the arguments which follow, the poetic theories and debate initiated by the Imagists allowed for two possible lines of development: on the one hand, the reversion to dualism with its unbridgeable gulf between subject and object, man and world, spirit and matter, a position which leads ultimately to blind faith or through irony to silence; and on the other hand, a dialectical monism, a view which sees history or reality as the continuing interaction of man and world, spirit and matter, thought and action, with language and literature as an integral and contributing part of that process. The British poets have by and large inclined to the first view; the Americans, at least those under discussion, have been more sympathetic to the second.

Of course, the moment of Imagism is necessarily an arbitrary starting point. Theories of organism and process reach back before the twentieth century. Organic philosophy and its implications for art, as Frank Kermode has pointed out in his discussion of the evolutions of the image, may be traced back to the earliest Romantics.[1] In Britain, Coleridge continues to be regarded as the most important source of such ideas. But recognition of the antecedents of process philosophy should not disguise the very considerable and revitalising effect the ideas of writers such as Bergson, then Whitehead and, later, Heidegger had on poetic theory. I hope to demonstrate how different versions of process philosophy have percolated through into poetry and at the same time to show how the poems under discussion may best be interpreted in terms of process. In this study I shall pay particular attention to the above-named philosophers: to Bergson as the first to answer the positivists and because of his crucial relationship to T.E. Hulme and the origins of

Imagism; to Whitehead as the metaphysician who accommodated Einsteinian physics and because of his influence on Charles Olson and hence on Robert Duncan and Edward Dorn; and to Heidegger because of his fundamental importance in shaping the contemporary intellectual climate, because of his acknowledged significance for Dorn and because of the many remarkable parallels between his writing and the work of Olson and Duncan. These philosophers afford different aspects of dynamic and processual ontologies and epistemologies which are of use in interpreting the poetic theory and practice of the poets under discussion. In no way is their influence exclusive; in each case, the philosophical elements are mediated and their contributions, more or less indirect, make up only a part of the many sources which have shaped the poem.

The development of poetic theory in the twentieth century has centered very largely round the notion of the image, a notion espoused by conflicting schools of poetry and criticism under many different guises. In his book, Romantic Image, Frank Kermode has recognised the centrality of the concept, its derivation from the "symbol" and its successive reincarnation, for instance as "ideogram", "vortex", "epiphany", "concrete universal", and so on. Kermode has indicated the difficulties which symbolism, imagism and all their successors have posed for the long poem:

> For the ideograms of that poem (Pound's Cantos) are symbols (or Images, or Vortices) which seemed, because of their developed function in Chinese thought, to have some hope of holding together in a structure owing nothing to logic and connective discourse. In this way, and with the aid of music (a fugue has structure but no discursive meaning) a long poem might be possible, whereas if it has to resort to continuous narrative or doctrine it becomes at best a series of short poems tediously bound together by prose. But the difficulties are enormous, in terms of precision and complexity of the symbolic relationships; and the finished product, eschewing all devices which we habitually recognise as establishing connexions, may be nothing but a confused heap of words, with only the isolated perfect detail to show how dreadfully the artist has squandered his power.[2]

Yet despite the formidable difficulties, poets have followed Pound in attempting the long poem on a methodology

derived from imagist theory. I shall argue that imagism and the various movements which have succeeded it, with all their ramifications and implications, are indeed central in the development of contemporary poetics, and moreover that those artists who have sought to create a contemporary long poem have inevitably been constrained by the context of these ideas, which though at first apparently inimical have proved to offer new possibilities for extended work in verse.

Although I shall refer extensively to the poetry and criticism of Pound, Williams, Olson and others, I have considered it more useful to take as my texts four lesser known long poems, very different from each other, but in those differences revelatory of the impact of imagism and its successors, with all the problems, reverbations and interpretations they have given rise to. The two earlier British poems, Anathemata by David Jones and In Memoriam James Joyce by Hugh MacDiarmid might be described as products of the first wave of modernism, while the two later, American poems, Robert Duncan's Passages and Edward Dorn's Gunslinger, are second generation, or what has come to be called "post-modern".[3]

These poems have more in common than simply their length. Each of them, in its own way, may be considered as poems in "open form". All of them, in different respects, have epic pretensions. Considering the latter question first, we must recognise that "epic" is a much abused and ill-defined term. We must also recognise that modern epic will not be in the pattern of Gilgamesh, nor The Iliad, The Aeneid, nor even Paradise Lost. Each of these versions of epic differs from the others though there may be common factors which allow for the continuing use of the name. These differences arise out of historical change and altering historical circumstances: to name only the most obvious, the difference in function between oral and written poetry, between the poem of the tribe or polis, and the poem of empire, or between the secular and religious epic. Thus, the epic of the twentieth century will have its nature

determined by the circumstances of the twentieth century although the history of the epic may impose certain constraints and provide for certain expectations. The term is loose and all we can offer is an attempt to identify those limits and expectations in relation to the poetry which interests us here.

"An epic is a poem including history"[4] said Ezra Pound, and went on to define history in terms of economics. William Carlos Williams, in an incidental comment in his introduction to a book by David Ruth, says this:

> The truth is that news offers the precise incentive to epic poetry, the poetry of events; and now is precisely the time for it since never by any chance is the character of a single fact ever truthfully represented today, if ever we are to have any understanding of what is going on about us we we shall need some other means to discover it.
>
> The epic poem would be our "newspaper", Pound's cantos are the algebraic equivalent but too perversely individual to achieve the universal understanding required. The epic, if you please, is what we're after, but not the lyric-epic sing-song. It must be a concise sharp-shooting epic style. Machine-gun style. Facts, facts, facts, tearing into us to blast away our stinking flesh of news. Bullets.[5]

It seems, therefore, that epic is expected to have a public, indeed political aspect, to be engaged with history and with contemporary events. But epic has also traditionally included myth and the modern epic can be no exception for it is by the very process of selecting facts and historical events, by relating them and structuring them that myth is created. This conscious pursuit of pattern which we may describe as mythopoeic is perhaps what Williams disparagingly called "algebraic" in the Cantos. Traditionally, epic preserves and perpetuates the culture of the tribe through gathering its history and ruling myths, presenting each in terms of the other, so that the society and members of the society will know themselves more fully, and through that self-awareness be rendered more free to choose and determine their own future course. Traditional oral epic has a strongly didactic and socially cohesive influence, which literary imitations from Virgil's Aeneid to Milton's Paradise Lost have sought

to emulate. No matter how successful or otherwise they have been, it must be recognised how strongly such aims have continued to influence the poets. MacDiarmid, in the long sections of his vast incomplete masterwork, and Olson, in The Maximus Poems, however different they may be in other ways, share this overwhelming urge to teach and prophecy to their people, to alter society. But all four of the poems we shall discuss incorporate and indeed struggle with themes of history and myth in order to weave from them some sort of coherence for their own time. This is true at the simplest level of content where we may take history as referring to all individual facts, whether these are chronological, geological or physical, and where myth will cover all references to mythology, religion, legend or folli-belief. Thus, for example, in Anathemata, David Jones's reference to ship-building in the Pool of London or geology in Wales is historical, while his evocation of Arthur or of Catholic ritual can be deemed myth. Similarly, MacDiarmid's discussion of the diversity of languages or of methods of catching fish can be considered historical while the appearance of the "Gile na Gile" ("brightest of the bright") is mythical. Robert Duncan's description of bombing in Vietnam or of the interior of his own home is, in the first instance, historical, while his invocation of Ahriman, the Persian principle of evil, or of Pegasus and Chrysaor, is mythical. In Edward Dorn's Gunslinger, Howard Hughes, Heidegger and the geography of the American West are historical, but the coach of Parmenides is mythical. The last example, however, neatly illustrates the arbitrariness of his distinction between history and myth, since Howard Hughes and Heidegger both appear as mythical rather than historical figures, though their historicity creates a surrealistic edge in the poem.

The importance of history and myth at the level of content implies an element of representational art, and indeed as far as representation goes these poets would follow the demands of the imagists for exactitude and precision. But the modern movement has sought very largely

to get away from the more straightforward kinds of representation, away from the idea of art as mimesis, in the sense of holding a mirror up to nature or producing simulacra of achieved forms. Instead, the attempt was to capture the process of becoming, a breakaway which in literature resulted in the use of surreal techniques, fractured continuity, apparent dislocations in time and space and the break-up of narrative. This is mimesis in a profounder sense, in that the poem attempts to imitate the process which inform the world and mind and in so doing recognises its own participation in and contribution to those processes. The life-form of the poem is generated through its continuing translation of history into myth, a process which is conditioned as much by its own existing shape as by the events which impinge upon it.

Attention to the image is as important in the long poem as in the shortest of imagist aperçus. However, it is the ordering or arrangement of the imagery which is of paramount significance for the long poem. Donald Davie, in his study of Pound,[6] points out that prolonged application of imagist techniques resulted in static, discontinuous poetry. However, it can be argued that the possibilities for the long poem have developed with the increasing recognition that it is the relationships between elements in a poem which create its dynamism, that images generate images in a process which has the coherence of the living organism. This process of ordering is metaphoric in that it consists in placing images in relation to each other according to perceived similarities or points of identity. It is also mythic, for according to the Aristotelian definition quoted approvingly by Olson and Duncan, myth is "the arrangement of the incidents".[7] In its metaphoric aspect, the process is innovative, creative, devouring fresh images which keep the poem alive and open. In its mythic aspect, the process reinforces its own form so that the selection of fresh material is not free, but determined by the existing shape of the poem. Each of these aspects implies the other; neither can be disregarded.

To give some crude examples: a leveret may grow to become a hare, but never a bull; and, on the literary level, the first book of Paradise Lost makes possible the twelfth book, but never the final Cantos. Metaphor may be the extension or discovery of meaning, but in the sense that discovery can only be the discovery of that which is already there, the discovered meaning is the myth.

When we recognise that the poem may have organic life we admit the possibility of the long poem, but we must also recognise that the poem is a form in language, itself a specialised form of life. History and myth, we have suggested, are the primary materials of the long poem, but the life of the poem is the conversion of history into myth through language. Therefore, though we must take account of external conditioning factors such as authorial intention, theoretical context and historical circumstances our first attention must be to the poem as a development in language, as it is written, as it is read or heard, and as it remains capable of growth.

Every rereading, revision and addition is a specific occasion and adds to the life of the poem. At the same time, and here the life of the poem differs from the physical life of the animal or human, each repetition or re-enactment of the poem lifts it out of historical time. This is the basis of ritual and myth and indeed the basis of the only human claim to immortality for which we have evidence. It is because the poem exists and works in historical time that it can achieve immortality and confer that immortality on men in the shape of social and cultural continuity.

The poetics of process demand a much more flexible concept of the boundaries of the poem. Of the four poems considered here, only one, Duncan's Passages, remains theoretically "unfinished". Yet Passages may die a "natural death" in that while its author need not officially put an end to it, no more may be written. Similarly, The Cantos, The Maximus Poems and Hugh MacDiarmid's vast and variously

named poemshave ended in the sense that their originators, having died, will add no more to them. They are less "finished", but only to a degree, than David Jones' Anathemata or Gunslinger while In Memoriam James Joyce is itself a component of the larger work mentioned above. Moreover, each of these poems contains within itself sections or passages which may well be regarded as complete poems in their own right. The problems of the boundaries of the poem and of individual authorship will be discussed further in the examination of the individual poems. Suffice it to say here that the boundaries in physical life are equally problematic. Should we consider the cell, the individual, the group or the society as the primary unit of life? Any single answer brings with it a doctrinaire philosophy which excludes other possibilities. This is also true of the poem and the realm of literature. Can we not recognise the form of each poem, of each section of each poem, and of each poetic opus, while at the same time seeing each unit as constituent of a larger form and eventually of the largest form of total human culture? We need also to be aware that the poem stays open, that its terminus comes from within itself as much as from the determination of the author. However, we may not delude ourselves by thinking that because the extent of a poem's life is indefinite it is infinite. Even at the widest level, the continuation of culture is inseparable from the continuation of human history.

In this thesis I consider four poems which I believe may most fruitfully be interpreted in terms of a poetics of process. In attempting such an interpretation I have sought to trace the historical developments of poetics which is their context, and, at the same time, to show, by an analysis of the texts, how a theory of process and of open form is precipitated from the poems themselves. In examining each poem I have tried to uncover the poetic theory and philosophy of the poet by considering his sources, his critical writings and his place in literary history.

However, since my aim has been to discover from these poems a consistent line of development and a theory of

open form which might provide a metapoetic ground or justification for the writing of long poems, my critical response has been strongly coloured by the poems themselves. This influence is, of course, as fruitful as it is inevitable and is part of the continuing life of the poems, but it is an influence of which I, as critic, must be conscious and wary.

In addition to the ideas gathered from the poems themselves and the reading which they have imposed upon me, I have drawn on a variety of critical writing. Much of this material has been too thoroughly absorbed or adapted to be explicitly acknowledged in the text and I have tried to remedy these omissions in the general section of the bibliography.

It may be helpful to give here a brief outline of the sequence and contents of chapters. Chapter One is a discussion of Bergson and Hulme in relation to the beginnings of Imagism, while Chapter Two investigates more closely the social and literary context of Imagism as it developed with Hulme and later Pound. This chapter includes an analysis of the various Imagist manifestoes and their implications.

Chapter Three considers David Jones and the Anathemata, the first part being a general introduction of Jones's work and ideas, while the second part is devoted to the analysis of the poem itself. Chapter Four, in the same pattern, is concerned with Hugh MacDiarmid and In Memoriam James Joyce.

Chapter Five which opens the second part of the thesis may be regarded as an updating of poetic theory since Imagism, tracing developments from the Thirties, the Objectivists, Oppen, Zukofsky and Williams to Projective Verse (1950) and beyond. Chapter Six attempts, briefly, to relate the philosophies of Whitehead and Heidegger as significant influences on post-modern aesthetics and, in particular, on process poetics. Chapter Seven is devoted to Robert Duncan and Passages, Chapter Eight to Gunslinger by Edward Dorn. A final chapter recapitulates and reiterates the main tenets and conclusions of the thesis.

FOOTNOTES

1 Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, Fontana edition (London, 1971).

2 Kermode, p.132.

3 David Jones, The Anathemata, 1952, paper edition (London, (1972). Hugh MacDiarmid, In Memoriam James Joyce (Glasgow, 1955). Robert Duncan, Passages in Bending the Bow, (New York, 1968) and Tribunals, (San Francisco, 1971). Edward Dorn, Gunslinger, (Berkeley, California, 1975). Fuller details of editions, publication history, etc. are given in the general bibliography.

4 Ezra Pound, 'Dateline', in Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, paper edition (London, 1960) p.86.

5 Quoted by Mike Weaver, William Carlos Williams, (Cambridge, 1971) p.128.

6 Donald Davie, Ezra Pound. The Poet as Sculptor, (London, 1965).

7 Charles Olson, The Special View of History, (Berkeley, 1970) p.23. Robert Duncan, The Truth and Life of Myth, (Michigan, 1968) frontispiece. Both authors are quoting from Jane Harrison's Themis.

CHAPTER ONE

BERGSON AND HULME

Bergson's philosophy was characterised by Bertrand Russell as neither verifiable nor falsifiable, but of its nature more attractive to poets and artists than to modern mathematicians or scientists. "His imaginative picture of the world, regarded as a poetic effort, is in the main not capable of either proof or disproof".[1] Russell, (as the) epitome of the rational humanist, was unlikely to be sympathetic to Bergson's views, his anti-intellectualism, his insistence on intuition. Nevertheless, Henri Bergson was for a time one of the most popular philosophers the world has known. People queued to hear him when he lectured in the Collège de France. His doings were followed by the Press. When he came to London he lectured to capacity audiences at University College, and anyone who, like Hulme, could boast a personal acquaintanceship found himself much cultivated. No doubt many of those who attended his lectures or quoted his philosophy were merely following fashion; on the other hand, a number of writers and thinkers found in his works a sort of salvation, a system which rescued them from the despair into which scientific determinism had plunged them. One example was the French philosopher Jacques Maritain, later to become distinguished as a Catholic neo-Thomist aesthetician. As students, he and his wife, desolate in an "unhappy and cruel universe, wherein the sole light was the philosophy of scepticism and relativism",[2] resolved to die by their own hands if within a fixed period they had not discovered some way of living according to some spiritual truth, some way of reasserting an absolute. We shall come back to Maritain, with his initial enthusiasm for Bergson and eventual rejection of him, when considering the ideas behind David Jones's poetry.

Meanwhile, we can turn to T.E. Hulme who had explained in some detail why he was attracted to Bergsonian philosophy,

for it was very largely through his lectures and propaganda that the French thinker's ideas were taken up in England. In a series of 'Notes on Bergson' published in The New Age during 1911 and 1912, Hulme described how he came to appreciate the philosopher:

> The growth of (the) mechanistic theory during the last two centuries has put a weapon of such a new and powerful nature into the hands of the materialist, that in spite of oneself one is compelled to submit. It is as if one side in the faction fight had suddenly armed themselves in steel breast-plates while the other went unprotected... A candid examination of one's own mind shows one that the mechanistic theory has an irresistible hold over one (that is, if one has been educated in a certain way) ... It is from this frank recognition of forces that comes my excitement about Bergson. I find, for the first time, this force which carries me on willy-nilly to the materialist side, balanced by a force, which is, as a matter of actual fact, apart from the question of what I want, able to meet on equal terms, the first force. As the materialist side becomes for a time triumphant, because it became, to a certain extent, artificial by putting on heavy armour (this is how the effect of the mechanistic theory appears to me), so in Bergson, in the conception of time, I find that the other side, the scattered opposition to materialism, has taken on for its part, a, to a certain extent, artificial form which is able to meet the other side on equal terms.[3]

We recognise that Bergson's philosophy attracted the disciples of the arts because it defended art while acknowledging the discoveries of science. Whitehead's ideas were also to appeal to poets because they offered an accommodation of science which was not inimical to art. However, Whitehead's philosophy is more radical for it transcends the two sides of materialism and anti-materialism, "the scattered opposition", whereas Bergson merely strengthened the latter against the former. It would be beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the historical course of the conflict between art and science or the correlated notion of the "dissociation of sensibility" which is effectively criticised in Kermode's Romantic Image. It is a conflict based on a deep-seated metaphysical dualism, on the premise of an ineradicable division between spirit and matter. Bergson himself did not attempt to overcome this division but rather elaborated and confused it. Claiming that the

division occurs far back in evolution, before the emergence of man, he asserted that the original vital impulse (elan vital) split into three forms of activity, vegetal, instinctual and intellectual.[4] We remark an affinity with Catholic Thomism, for Aquinas posited three kinds of soul, vegetative, sensitive and rational.[5] Man is possessed of all three but the last is peculiar to him. By virtue of his rational soul he is placed between Creator and creation, an uneasy combination of spirit and matter. The acceptance of dualism which has characterised modern thought has been a common base for most scientists, artists and religious believers. Anti-positivists have rejected, for the most part, not dualism, but rationalism. Rationalism, based on materialism, leads to scientific determinism which was held to be irreconcileable with a belief in the value or significance of art or literature. As examples of the inhibiting force of determinism, Bergson and Hulme cited the famous declarations of Laplace and Huxley.

> An intellect which at a given instant knew all the forces with which nature is animated and the respective situations of the beings that comprise Nature - supposing that some intellect were vast enough to subject these data to analysis - would embrace in the same formulae the notions of the greatest bodies in the universe and those of the slightest atom; nothing would be uncertain for it, and the future like the past, would be present to its eyes. -Laplace-

> If the fundamental proposition of evolution is true, that the entire world, living and not living, is the result of the mutual interaction according to definite laws of the forces possessed by the molecules of which the primitive nebulosity of the universe was composed - it is no less certain that the existing world lay potentially in the cosmic vapour, and that a sufficient intellect, could from the knowledge of the properties of that vapour, have predicted, say the state of the fauna in Great Britain in 1869 with as much certainty as one can say what will happen to the vapour of the breath on a cold winter's day.
> -Huxley-[6]

The possibility of such complete knowledge of past and future, the assertion that every event is predetermined seems to deny that there can be either free will or creativity. If every event is already determined by inevitable chains, then no action can be chosen or free. Furthermore, if

every act depends on what has preceded it and can at least in theory be predicted, there is no possibility of novelty. All works of art exist already potentially, and the artist must consider himself part of the cosmic machine, a mere instrument devoid of will, for their realisation. Few artists could work with such an understanding of their role. The conception is particularly uncongenial to those reared in the cultural traditions of the West, in the heritage of the Renaissance and the Romantics, for they hold dear the notions of man's free will, of the human spirit as either itself divine or with access to the divine and hence outside natural or mechanical laws. T.E. Hulme described this "nightmare":

> In the picture of the world as it existed before the arrival of the mechanistic theory you had a good deal of freedom in matter itself, and consciousness had this certificate, at least, to it - its independence and reality - that it was able to act directly on and produce changes in this, the physical world. You might suspect its existence to be a precarious one; but, at any rate, it did exist temporarily, and could prove this existence by real action. But if you accept the mechanistic view of the world, not only does all freedom disappear from the material world, but also from the organic. The world is pictured as a mass of atoms and molecules, which are supposed to carry out unceasingly movements of every kind. The matter of which our bodies is composed is subject to the same laws as the matter outside. The motion of every atom of your brain is, then, subject to the same laws of motion as those which govern all matter. It is, then, completely mechanical and calculable. If, then, at any moment you know the position of all the atoms of a human body, you could calculate with unfailing certainty the past, present and future actions of the person to whom that body belonged. Consciousness, then, does nothing; it makes no difference; everything would go on just the same without it.[7]

The ultimate consequences, therefore, of rational empiricist activity is to verify its own utter expendability. It was in answer to the despairing nihilism which such a position entailed that Bergson had recourse to a second mode of knowledge, "intuition". It must be emphasised that he still accepted the fundamental dualist metaphysic, indeed reasserted it against the radical materialism of the extreme positivists. According to Bergson, the function of the practical intellect or

scientific method is to organise experience so as to enable us to act, but this process necessitates abstraction and generalisation which distort the truth of reality. Against this, he championed intuition which alone gives access to the real but is removed from action and therefore impotent. Intellect, writes Bergson in Creative Evolution

> has the advantage of enabling us to foresee the future and of making us in some measure masters of events; in return, it retains of the moving reality only eventual immobilities, that is to say, views taken of it by our mind. It symbolises the real and transposes it into the human rather than expresses it. The other knowledge (intuition) if it is possible is practically useless, it will not extend our empire over our nature, it will even go against certain natural aspirations of the intellect; but, if it succeeds, it is reality itself that it will hold in a firm and final embrace.[8]

This conception of the activity of the practical intellect may seem akin to Heidegger's account of "inauthentic" or "everyday" behaviour. However, Heidegger moved beyond dualism with his concept of "Being in the World" and recognised that it is this inauthentic understanding which is leading us to destruction. Similarly, Charles Olson, disciple of Whitehead's philosophy of process which also transcends dualism, decried the tradition of rational empiricism. "With Aristotle the two great means appear - logic and classification. And it is they that have so fastened themselves on habits of thought that action is interfered with, absolutely interfered with, I should say".[9] But Olson, unhampered by dualism, believed in the possibility of knowledge as direct access to, indeed possession of the real, so that knowledge and action become one. His position and the influence of Whitehead and Heidegger will be discussed at length in Chapter Six. In this chapter our first concern must be the impact of Bergson on contemporary literature.

Let us then consider Hulme's presentation of Bergson's conception of the intellect. This is expressed most succinctly in his paper "Bergson's Theory of Art" which is an abstract of, and at times quotes directly from, Bergson's writings, particularly as found in the three major works,

Time and Free Will, Creative Evolution and Matter and Memory.

> Man's primary need is not knowledge but action ... The function of the intellect is so to present things not that we may most thoroughly understand them, but that we may successfully act on them.[10]

> ... What I see and hear is simply a selection made by my senses to serve as a light for my conduct. My senses and my consciousness give me no more than a practical simplification of reality. In the usual perception I have of reality all the differences useless to man have been suppressed. My perception runs in certain moulds. Things have been classified with a view to the use I can make of them. It is this classification I perceive rather than the real shape of things. I hardly see an object, but merely notice what class it belongs to - what ticket I ought to apply to it.[11]

The method of the intellect is to analyse everything in terms of atomic explanations:

> We find atoms everywhere. We reduce everything to extensive manifolds. We always pursue the method of analysis simply because that is the only way in which the intellect can deal with things.[12]

Hence the "intellect distorts reality because it persists in unfolding things out in space". Against the "extensive manifolds", Hulme, following Bergson, sets up the notion of the "intensive manifold" which is unanalysable and can be known only through intuition. Hulme's theories of imagism and his prescriptions for art and poetry are to a great extent derived from this notion of intensive manifolds. To understand this concept, we must return to Bergson's assertion of two ways of knowing, through intuition and through intellect, and to his distinctions between abstract and real time, or duration.

Bergson argues, in Time and Free Will, that men have a special faculty of perceiving or conceiving empty, homogeneous space, and that this faculty enables us to "use clean-cut distinctions, to count, to abstract, and perhaps also to speak".[13] This homogeneous medium is devoid of every quality, but in it the mind can set or represent to itself material objects which are mutually exclusive. In

other words, extensive manifolds are apprehended in space by the intellect. It is customary to think of time as similar to space, as being also a homogeneous, unbounded medium. However, argues Bergson, this is a mistaken view, for "when we make time a homogeneous medium in which conscious states unfold themselves, we take it to be given all at once, which amounts to saying that we abstract it from duration". When we try to recollect our psychic status we represent them in abstract time, or in what Bergson calls space. "We may therefore surmise that time, conceived under the form of a homogeneous medium, is some spurious concept, due to the trespassing of the idea of space upon the field of pure consciousness".[14] Time, as a homogeneous medium, can be reduced to space. "Real time" or "pure duration", on the other hand, is "the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present states from its former states". Real time can only be lived, it cannot be analysed or represented, for analysis and representation are symbolic and atomic processes which are executed in the medium of space. Pure duration is not homogeneous since it is always changing, always becoming.

> In a word, pure duration might well be nothing but a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalise themselves in relation to one another, without any affiliation with number; it would be pure heterogeneity.[15]

This notion of heterogeneity is somewhat akin to Hulme's rather picturesque philosophy of "Cinders":[16]

> The cosmos is only organised in parts; the rest is cinders ... Many necessary conditions must be fulfilled before the counters and the chessboard can be posed elegantly on the cinders ... The absolute is to be described not as perfect, but if existent as essentially imperfect, chaotic and cinderlike ...
> Only in the fact of consciousness is there unity in the world ...
> Unity is made in the world by drawing squares over it.

Hulme's notes express an extreme of scepticism but they draw attention to the same disparity between the reality which is flux and the order imposed by the human mind.

However, continuous change is the reality and is necessary for creative evolution. The mathematician can conceive of abstract time when he divides intervals for the purpose of calculation, but he is always speaking of given moments, which are as abstract as the concept of the pure point in space. They have nothing to do with real time, which is flow. "The world the mathematician deals with is a world that dies and is reborn at every instant". But evolution demands continuity, real time, "the persistence of the past into the present". "Continuity of change, preservation of the past in the present - the living being seems, then, to share these attributes with consciousness. Can we go further and say that life, like conscious activity, is invention, is unceasing creation".[17]

Hulme's explanation of "real time" may help to clarify the notion:

> In the mechanical world, then, time might flow with infinite rapidity and the entire past, present and future be spread out all at once. But inside us it is very different. In us time is an undeniable fact. If I want to mix a glass of sugar and water I have to wait willy-nilly until the sugar melts. This is real time; it coincides with my impatience, that is with a certain portion of my duration which I cannot contract as I like ... Real duration, real time is an absolute thing which cannot be contracted or hastened because in it real work is being done, really new things are appearing.
>
> In the world of mechanism ... there is no real creation of new things, there is merely a rearrangement of fixed elements in various positions. They can't be said to exist in time, because nothing new happens, there is no real time because there is no real change. At a certain depth of mental life you experience real time because there is a real change; new things are produced and not a mere rearranging of old parts. Time then is creation. In real time you get real creation and so real freedom.[18]

We may ask how we are to apprehend this reality which is duration, if every attempt to do so through the intellect is doomed to be a distortion since it inevitably introduces three dimensions. Here the artist comes into his own and the field is left clear for imagism. We return to Hulme's interpretation of Bergson's theory of art.

7. The creative activity of the artist is only necessary because of the limitations placed on internal and external perception by the necessities of action. If we could break through the veil which action interposes, if we could come into direct contact with sense and consciousness, art would be useless and unnecessary. Our eyes, aided by memory, would carve out in space and fix in time the most inimitable of pictures. In the centre of one's own mind, we should hear constantly a certain music. But as this is impossible, the function of the artist is to pierce through here and there, accidently as it were, the veil placed between us and reality by the limitations of our perception engendered by action. [19]

A difficulty with this apologia for the artist in both Bergson and Hulme is that no explicit reason is given as to why we should need to pierce through to "reality", particularly since, as Bergson tells us, the intellect is so admirably geared to enable us to act. We can, of course, move further for ourselves, to deduce implied values for art; for instance, that by introducing us to new perceptions, fresher more vivid representations of reality, it enables us to modify our own concepts and categories so that we are better equipped to survive in the reality which changes.

Yet the step from intuition which can engage with the dynamism of flux to the work of art which is static, outside "real time" and the world of the practical intellect, remains an unsatisfactory one. Hulme, the arch-enemy of romanticism, seems to take over without question from Bergson the highly romantic idea that artists are peculiar individuals with a peculiar talent (or weakness) for intuitions:

13. From time to time in a fit of absent-mindedness nature raises up minds which are more detached from life - a natural detachment, one innate in the structure of sense or consciousness, which at once reveals itself by a virginal manner of seeing, hearing or thinking.

27. ... It is not sufficient to say that an artist is a person who is able to convey over the actual things he sees the emotions he feels. It is necessary before that that he should be a person who is able to emancipate himself from the moulds which a language and ordinary perception force on him and be able to see things freshly as they really are. [20]

It seems then that the qualification for being an artist is a well-developed faculty of intuition, which necessarily involves a certain detachment from life, or at least from the life of action. But both Hulme and Bergson tend to emphasize the subjective aspect of artistic creation, to identify with the artist rather than discuss the work of art. Bergson, for instance, explains the notion of intuition by referring to the creative process:

> In conclusion, we may remark that there is nothing mysterious in this faculty. Everyone of us has had occasion to exercise it to a certain extent. Any one of us, for instance, who has attempted literary composition, knows that when the subject has been studied at length, the materials all collected, and the notes all made, something more is needed in order to set about the work of composition itself, and that is an often very painful effort to place ourselves directly at the heart of the subject, and to seek as deeply as possible an impulse, after which we need only let ourselves go. [21]

Intuition is the subjective and internal experience of continuous reality permeated by recollections of the past, but by its very nature neither analyzable, nor, one would have thought, capable of expression. After all, the media of poetry, painting and even of music make use of recognisable and pre-existing concepts and forms which are discrete, more or less spatial and necessarily different from the experience of duration they seek to express.

Music can be experience in time and therefore may be intuited as pure duration, as long as we do not attempt to analyze or intellectualise it (for Bergson on music, see Time and Free Will, p.14-15). Music, however, cannot represent any other intuition without distortion any more than poetry or painting. It is only a duration as it is known for itself. Bergson frequently uses music as an analogy for the intuition of duration. However, perhaps through an accident of psychology, perhaps for more intrinsic reasons, Bergson, like his follower, Hulme, was, as Russell and other critics have noticed, very much a visualiser. Many of his ideas, like Hulme's, are conveyed through vivid images and metaphors rather than by logically developed argument. For the reader who has not succeeded

in empathising with Bergson this mannerism can be more irritating than enlightening, for a difficult argument is as likely to be resolved by a striking analogy as by a rational conclusion. Of course, since Bergson wanted metaphysics to be based on intuition rather than intellect, perhaps his practice must be acknowledged as, at least, consistent. In T.E. Hulme this trick of using metaphor as the central mode of argument jars strangely with his affectation of a plain, no-nonsense, almost hectoring prose.

Bergson's own reference to the nature and value of aesthetic experience are for the most part incidental and his explanations are less than adequate. In Time and Free Will he declares "the object of art is to put to sleep the active or rather resistant powers of our personality, and thus to bring us into a state of perfect responsiveness, in which we realise the idea that is suggested to us and sympathise with the feeling that is expressed". He describes this process in poetry:

> The poet is he with whom feelings develop into images, and the images themselves into words which translate them while obeying the laws of rhythm. In seeing these images pass before our eyes we in our turn experience the feeling which was, so to speak, their emotional equivalent, but we should never realise those images to strongly without the regular movements of the rhythm by which our soul is lulled into self-forgetfulness, and, as in a dream, thinks and sees with the poet. [22]

This passage leaves many questions unanswered: Why should the feelings or even the images of the poet be relevant to anyone else? In what way do feelings, images and words correspond? How do we know that the feeling we experience on hearing the poet's words is equivalent to his original feelings? However, the dissociation of rhythm from image, here described, radically separates form from content, and when on the next page Bergson somewhat curiously states that nature does not command the forces of rhythm, he further dissociates the human from the natural. These divisions proceed from Bergson's fundamental dualism, which we have already recognised.

We continue Bergson's account of the process of artistic creation:

> ... the artist aims at giving us a share in (his) emotion, so rich, so personal, so novel, and at enabling us to experience what he cannot make us understand. This he will bring about by choosing, among the outward signs of his emotions, those which our body is likely to imitate mechanically, though slightly, as soon as it perceives them, so as to transport us all at once into the indefinable psychological state which called them forth. Thus will be broken down the barrier interposed by time and space between his consciousness and ours, and the richer in ideas and the more pregnant with sensations and emotions in the feeling within whose limits the artist has brought us, the deeper and higher shall we find the beauty thus expressed. The successive intensities of the aesthetic feelings thus correspond to changes of state occurring in us, and the degrees of depth to the larger or smaller number of elementary psychic phenomena which we dimly discern in the fundamental emotion. [23]

It is not clear whether this is intended as a psychological or a metaphorical description. Again we notice that the artist is a special person, with richer, deeper emotions than others, which are, however, to be communicated through whatever is his particular medium. The physiological ideas here are curious, reminding us as much of sympathetic magic as of modern biology or psychology. Bergson appears to be suggesting here that our emotions or psychic states derive from physical states, a view which would seem to be more appropriate to the crudest behaviourism and at odds with the general tenor of his philosophy.

In "Bergson's Theory of Art", to which we have already referred, Hulme attempted to systematise a Bergsonian aesthetic, and in so doing framed many of the original tenets of Imagism. Hulme asserts that the aesthetic emotion is the artist's intuition of the vital force or impetus which organises the assembled features of life, and that while this aesthetic emotion may be a very small part of any particular work of art it is nevertheless a defining characteristic. At this stage, like Bergson, he does not explain how the subjective emotion is objectified in the work of art. Art is, however, necessary since it allows us to pierce through the veil of action to reality. Apparently the artist is able to escape the conventional

ways of perception and so can discover new aspects of experience, common to all of us, which he can fix in art:

> It is as if the surface of our mind was a sea in a continual state of motion, that there were so many waves on it, their existence was so transient, and they interfered so much with each other, that one was unable to perceive them. The artist by making a fixed model of one of these transient waves enables you to isolate it out and to perceive it in yourself. In that sense art merely reveals, it never creates. [24]

The poet conveys his "vividly felt actual sensations" through new metaphor since conventional language has lost its sensual or visual impact and is therefore ineffective. Hulme argues that all language is originally metaphorical. "Every word in the language originates as a live metaphor, but gradually of course all visual meaning goes out of them and they become a kind of counters". [25] With this view of language, Hulme places himself among the Romantics as he does also in another essay when he declares "Poetry is always the advance guard of language". ("Notes on Language and Style" in Further Speculations edited by Sam Hynes (Minneapolis, 1955) p.81). We need only think of Shelley:

> Their language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until words, which represent them, become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thought, instead of pictures of integral thoughts and then, if no new poets should arise and create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganised, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse. [26]

The idea that language develops through metaphor and that in its archaic origins is poetic stems from Vico and Herder, may be found in the English Romantics, in Emerson and Whitman, and has been put forward in recent times by Ernst Cassirer, Susanne Langer and the "symbolist" critics. [27]

In Hulme's argument originality of metaphor or imagery is not considered as valuable in itself, but is only necessary because of the defects of language, All words are by definition already "counter-words" since language as "a communal apparatus ... only carries over that part

of the emotion which is common to all of us". To convey a vividly felt individual emotion, the artist is compelled "to invent new metaphors and new epithets ... compelled, simply, in order to be accurate, to invent original ways of stating things". [28]

Hulme sees the image or metaphor as working on a non-intellectual level, as perhaps acting on our instincts to "convey over bodily" the sensation or emotion the artist wishes to communicate. Again and again, he uses the somewhat clumsy phrase "convey over" as if by this emphasis he could effect the leap from the mind of the poet to that of his reader:

> The element in (poetry) which will be found in the rest of art is not the accidental fact that imagery conveys over actually felt visual sensation, but the actual character of that communication, the fact that it hands you over the sensation as directly as possible, attempts to get it over bodily with all the qualities it possessed for you when you experienced it.
> The feeling conveyed over to one is almost a kind of instinctive feeling. You get continuously from good imagery this conviction that the poet is constantly in the presence of a vividly felt visual and physical scene. [29]

This passage is typical of Hulme's prose style. If we read him at length we notice that his writing is exceedingly repetitive, proceeding by a series of short sentences which recur with slight alterations in wording or meaning at later stages in the text. He hammers again and again on a point to drive it home, and intensifies his effect by numerous metaphors and a striking use of often redundant adverbs and prepositions: "convey over", "fix it down", "diving down", "crystallised out" (all from "Bergson's Theory of Art"). Though some of the repetition, abruptness and downright awkwardness of Hulme's style may be accounted for by the fact that many of his pieces were first written as public lectures, nevertheless we feel that he himself is motivated by the desire to make language work at the sub- or pre-conceptual level.

Nevertheless, the forcefulness of the passage quoted above disguises a number of problems. Hulme instructs

that the artist must invent new imagery, metaphors, epithets, that he cannot use language "straight-forwardly". This is an elevation of the conscious faculty of fancy and might seem a direction to contrivance or conceit. On the other hand, he advocates the "passionate desire for accuracy", citing in illustration the example of the "architect's curve". This is expressed more concisely in another essay, "Romanticism and Classicism".

> You know what I call architect's curves - flat pieces of wood with all different kinds of curvature. By a suitable selection from these you can draw approximately any curve you like. The artist I take to be the man who simply can't bear the idea of that 'approximately'. He will get the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind. I shall here have to change my metaphor a little to get the process in his mind. Suppose that instead of your carved pieces of wood you have a springy piece of steel of the same types of curvatures as the wood. Now the state of tension or concentration of mind, if he is doing anything really good in this struggle against the ingrained habit of technique, may be represented by a man employing all his fingers to bend the steel out of its own curve and into the exact curve which you want. Something different to what it would assume naturally. [30]

We are told that contrivance or distortion must be exerted on language; but still we are not told how there can be a correlation between language and sensations or emotions, nor how new metaphor can be expressed through old "counter" words. Clearly the answer must lie in how words are disposed and relationships established between juxtaposed words and images. By arranging conventional elements of discourse in new ways the artist hopes somehow to stimulate the original experience which produced his individual emotion, or at least to incite a similar emotion in his audience. Can this be compared to the activity of one psychologist who might try to induce fear in a subject by showing him film of a charging bull, or is it more like that of another, perhaps a neurologist who might try for the same effect by applying electric shocks to appropriate areas of the brain? Does the artist try to reproduce both cause and effect of his intuition or subjective experience, or simply effect, and in either case, does the work of art retain any autonomy or objective value? Hulme himself

seems to look on art as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. "If we could break through the veil which action interposes, if we could come into direct contact with sense and consciousness, art would be useless and unnecessary". [31]

We may sum up: clear, hard, dry poems are to be produced, not as objective works of art, ends in themselves, but as communications of the artist's intuitions to the reader in the attempt to arouse that reader to similar intuitions. However, this is to be effected, not imaginatively nor intuitively, but rather to be engineered by the intellectual faculty of "fancy". We should note Hulme's inconsistency in his attitude to Coleridge and Coleridgean terminology. "Vital" or organic art is commended in "Romanticism and Classicism", but condemned in "Humanism" (p.8). "Fancy" is exalted at the expense of the imagination in "Romanticism and Classicism" (p.113) yet this is qualified on p.137:

> When the analogy has not enough connection with the thing described and there is a certain excess, then you have the play of the fancy - that I grant is inferior to imagination.

Then on p.139 the artist is described as having a "powerfully imaginative mind". This uncertainty may best be explained by Hulme's vagueness about the difference between the artist's conception, imaginative or intuitive, and its execution or objectification as a work of art which is an operation of fancy. Hulme champions "fancy" against "imagination" in his battle against the Romantics. His use of the term is, in part, bravado, but the distinction is nevertheless vitally related to his central philosophy of discontinuity, and will be discussed below. Meanwhile we must return to some of the problems inherent in Hulme's theory of imagism which were to cause difficulties for the later Imagists but so stimulate new developments under the aegis of Pound, Wyndham Lewis and the Vorticists.

Hulme repeatedly speaks of the image or the work of art as something "fixed", something taken out of the flux

of reality. "The big artist, the innovator, leaves the level where things are crystallised out into the different shapes, and, diving down into the inner flux, comes back with a new shape which he endeavours to fix".[32] In another essay he describes how he himself came to verse "from the inside rather than the outside. There were certain impressions which I wanted to fix".[33]

If the image is fixed it becomes static, "dead", and thus belies the central truth of reality. Yet Hulme follows Coleridge in asserting his image or analogy to be vital, or organic, a complexity "in which the parts cannot be said to be elements as each one is modified by the other's presence, and each one to a certain extent is the whole".[34] These complexities he described as "intensive" in the Bergsonian sense, and claims "to deal with the intensive you must use intuition":

> A powerfully imaginative mind seizes and combines at the same instant all the important ideas of its poem or picture, and while it works with one of them, it is at the same instant working with and modifying all in their relation to it and never losing sight of their bearings on each other as the motion of a snake's body goes through all parts at once and its volition acts at the same instant in coils which go contrary ways.[35]

There is a confusion here, caused again by the failure to distinguish psychological events and the creative process of the artist from the completed art object. Working through the implications of the papers on "Romanticism and Classicism" and "Bergson's Theory of Art", one could suggest the following argument. The artist has a specially developed faculty of intuition enabling him to apprehend pure duration. The possession of such a talent involves at the same time a necessary detachment from action or practical life. He creates a work of art through images in order to communicate his intuition. We cannot properly say he works to "fix" the intuition since the essence of intuition is its apprehension of real motion. However, to communicate his intuition, sometimes confusingly called "image", he seeks, if he is a poet, for fresh images or metaphors, new arrangements of words which will startle his reader into experiencing

an equivalent emotion, or a sort of second-hand intuition. Paradoxically, the fixed image or work of art which conveys the intuition becomes, as soon as it is objectified or placed in the public domain, itself "extensive", dead, conventional. But these characteristics are those we draw on for practical purposes. Hence the objectified image of the intuition experienced by the artist in isolation from action, may open up possibilities for new action by the rest of us. The function and value of art would be, therefore, that it trues us, brings us closer to reality.

Even if we accept this admittedly tortuous argument, we confront many further difficulties. Hulme, in his attack on Romanticism, followed not only Bergson, but the German aesthetician, William Worringer, from whose work, indeed, he derived his distinction between Romanticism and Classicism. According to Worringer, whom Hulme paraphrases in "Modern Art",[36] there were two main kinds of art which satisfy two distinct aesthetic needs and spring from two completely different ways of looking at the world. On the one hand, we have abstract, formalistic art like that of the Egyptians or Byzantines; on the other, representational or naturalistic art like that of the Greeks or the Renaissance. Abstract art goes with the religious or classical attitude, Hulme argues, and signifies a fear of or alienation from nature, a consciousness of human limits and of original sin. Naturalistic art, on the other hand, entails a "happy pantheistic relation between men and the outside world",[37] an optimistic rationalism and a belief that man is good and possessed of unlimited potential. Again, in "Humanism" Hulme argues that the world-view or dominating categories which have determined our values since the Renaissance are mistaken. Contrasting the present period with the Middle Ages he says:

> Turn now to the second period. This does not seem to form a coherent period like the first. But it is possible to show, I think, that all thought since the Renaissance, in spite of its apparent variety, in reality forms one coherent whole. It all rests on the same presuppositions which were denied by the previous period. It all rests on the same conception of the nature of man, and all exhibits the same

complete inability to realise the meaning of the dogma of Original Sin. In this period not only has its philosophy, its literature, and ethics been based on this new conception of man as fundamentally good, as sufficient, as the measure of things, but a good case can even be made out for regarding many of its characteristic economic features as springing entirely from this central abstract conception.[38]

Within this period, Hulme distinguishes humanism proper, with which he has some sympathy, from Romanticism, which he regards as thoroughly reprehensible.

Judged in this light, William Carlos Williams, Hugh MacDiarmid and later Charles Olson and Robert Duncan must certainly be termed Romantics. Pound, with his faith in enlightenment and human reason, also qualifies as a Romantic, or at least as a humanist under Hulme's definition. Once more we recognise that the two world-views spring from the basic metaphysical distinction between dualism and monism. While the religious or classical writer accepts dualism, the fundamental division between spirit and matter, the Romantic or Humanist in declaring the unity of the Universe must be a monist. Traditionally this monism would force him to one or other of the extremes of materialism or idealism, theoretical positions which in practice have generally proved untenable. The poet, as MacDiarmid has said "would aye be where extremes meet". It should not surprise us therefore to find these poets turning to philosophical systems such as those of Whitehead and Heidegger which in their different ways go beyond materialism and idealism.

Hulme, an obdurate dualist, believing all such views to be mistaken, predicted and demanded a new classicism with a new "geometrical art":

this change from a vital to a geometrical art is the product of and will be accompanied by a certain change of sensibility, a certain change of general attitude, and ... this new attitude will differ in kind from the humanism which has prevailed from the Renaissance to now, and will have certain analogies to the attitude of which geometrical art was the expression in the past.[39]

Hulme was neither nostalgic nor a medievalist, recognising that the new art could not ignore the tradition of

"vital" or naturalistic art, but must emerge from and be enriched by it. However, although he argues that particular periods are ruled by particular "Weltanschauungen" dominating categories, or what we might today call arch-myths or paradigms, Hulme does not conclude that truth or the good are relative: "the way in which I have explained the action of the central abstract attitudes and ways of thinking, and the use of the word pseudo-categories, might suggest that I hold relativist ideas about their validity, but I don't. I hold the religious conception of ultimate value to be right, the humanist wrong".[40] In order to escape subjection to false categories, he demands a long historical view:

> Just as a knowledge of the colours extended and separated in the spectrum enables us to distinguish the feebler colours confused together in shadows, so a knowledge of these ideas, as it were objectified and extended in history enablesus to perceive them hidden in our own minds. Once they have been brought to the surface of the mind, they lose their inevitable character. They are no longer categories. We have lost our naiveté. Provided that we have a great enough length of history at our disposal, we then always vaccinate ourselves against the possibility of having false categories. For in a couple of thousand years the confused human mind works itself out clearly into all the separate attitudes it is possible for it to assume. Humanity ought therefore always to carry with it a library of a thousand years as a balancing pole.[41]

But, even as Hulme recognises, awareness of the categories which dominate us does not entail the correctness of any specific world-view. The Romantic or Humanist might still argue that his ideas were the right ones. Moreover, Hulme's philosophy of history seems to carry within itself seeds of self-contradiction. The passage quoted here recognises a cyclical process in human affairs and thought, but he rejects the notion that this could be a spiral or "progress" in any favourable sense:

> In November 1829, a tragic date for those who see with regret the establishment of a lasting and devastating stupidity, Goethe - in answer to Eckermann's remark that human thought and action seemed to repeat itself, going round in a circle - said: 'No, it is not a circle, it is a spiral'. You disguise the wheel by making it run up an inclined plane; it them becomes "Progress" which is the modern substitute for religion.[42]

Not only does this argument seem to be at variance with his acknowledgement that each period of art is influenced and enriched by what precedes it, it also renders somewhat futile his assertion of absolute values, since, even if they do take hold for the period in which we happen to live, they will, in the course of time, again be ousted.

The dualist classicism advocated by Hulme entails in art and literature a dichotomy between form and content, or rather an emphasis on form at the expense of content. The content of the work of art is determined by the artist's original experience or intuition, the intuition which he seeks to repeat, recreate or simulate. However, as we have seen, Hulme argues that this intuition is an experience in real time and as such unique and incommunicable. The work of art can never be more than an analogy or representation, a work of fancy, a construct in space which inevitably schematizes the content it tries to convey. Therefore the artist may abandon the attempt to imitate or simulate content, the "messiness" of nature and of flux, and instead attempt to discover abiding forms, the recurrent patterns or laws which underlie the particulars of experience or intuition. In his own time, Hulme saw this need as "a desire for austerity and bareness, a striving towards structure and away from the messiness and confusion of nature and natural things".[43]

There are difficulties in elucidating Hulme's ideas which arise from the fragmentary nature of his writings. At the time of his death, none of his work had been published in book form. Speculations (1924) edited by Herbert Read and Further Speculations (1955) edited by Sam Hynes were both assembled from his unpublished papers, magazine articles and public lectures. Hulme's revision of his early work was only partial so that the Lecture on Modern Poetry which he first delivered in 1908 was given again in 1914 in substantially the same form although in 1913 he had come under the influence of Worringer and the attraction of geometric abstract art. In the "Lecture on Modern Art", he cites the ancient search for permanence

in flux, for poetry which would be perfect and immortal, "Living in a dynamic world they wished to create a static fixity where their souls might rest", but only to repudiate it:

> Now the whole trend of the modern spirit is away from that; philosophers no longer believe in absolute truth. We no longer believe in perfection, either in verse or in thought, we frankly acknowledge the relative. We shall no longer strive to attain the absolutely perfect form in poetry. Instead of these minute perfections of phrase and words, the tendency will be rather towards the production of a general effect; this of course takes away the predominance of metre and a regular number of syllables as the element of perfection in words. We are no longer concerned that stanzas shall be shaped and polished like gems, but rather that some vague mood shall be communicated. In all the arts, we seek for the maximum of individual and personal expression, rather than for the attainment of any absolute beauty. (Emphasis mine). [44]

It seems impossible to reconcile this passage with demands for "the exact curve", for "dry, hard, classical verse", let alone with "abstract geometrical art". Perhaps all they do share is Hulme's belief that the intuition which inspires the work of art and the effects which a work of art communicates operate at a non-logical or pre-conceptual level. This is not the case with the actual production of the work which for Hulme is very much a matter of the conscious intellect united with practical craft.

In this same lecture Hulme predicted a new poetry which would be primarily visual or sculptural. This insistence on the visual image, perhaps a consequence of his interest in painting, led to the assertion that the new poetry would be read, not recited, and to the dismissal of rhythmic or musical effects in poetry which he seemed to confuse with fixed or regular metre. Thus, he dismisses the older bardic art with an argument which, as it happens, is in direct contradiction of Bergson: (see p.10 above).

> The effect of rhythm, like that of music, is to produce a kind of hypnotic state, during which suggestions of grief or ecstasy are easily and powerfully effective, just as when we are drunk all jokes seem funny. This is the art of chanting, but the procedure of the new visual art is

just the contrary. It depends for its effect, not on the kind of half sleep produced, but on arresting the attention, so much so that the succession of visual images should exhaust one. [45]

Hulme declares that the "big things", actions, the matter of history, science and philosophy are no longer fit subjects for verse; instead there is to be a concentration on momentary personal experience. But this rejection of such large areas of human experience is arbitrary since science and history hear on the individual and since any poem he or she may produce will become part of the general history and cultural heritage. Hulme argues:

But the modern is the exact opposite of this, it no longer deals with heroic action, it has become definitely and finally introspective and deals with expression and communication of momentary phases in the poet's mind. It was well put by Mr. G.K. Chesterton in this way - that where the old dealt with the siege of Troy, the new attempts to express the emotions of a boy fishing. The opinion you often hear expressed, that perhaps a new poet will arrive who will synthesize the whole modern movement into a great epic, shows an entire misconception of the tendency of modern verse. [46]

Yet we may feel that the Siege of Troy is as likely to affect the emotions of any educated adult as the thoughts of a boy fishing, an image of pastoral innocence which is surely itself specious. The poet whose introspection does not discover some consciousness of his history or culture would probably not be one we should care to read very extensively. Even Hulme's own minimal oeuvre does not succeed in avoiding the "big things" or the influence of history.

Mana Aboda.

Beauty is the marking-time, the stationary vibration,
the feigned ecstasy of an arrested impulse unable to
reach its natural end.

Mana Aboda, whose bent form
The sky in arched circle is,
Seems ever for an unknown grief to mourn.
Yet on a day I heard her cry:
"I weary of the roses and the singing poets -
Josephs all, not tall enough to try".

or from "Conversion":

> Now pass I to the final river
> Ignominiously, in a sack, without sound,
> As any peeping Turk to the Bosphorus.

Even Hulme's best-known poem surely wins some of its effect from the perhaps unintended implication of social comment:

> And round about were the wistful stars
> With white faces like town children. [47]

It would seem that the individual's experience cannot be divorced from his cultural inheritance, so that this argument against the long poem must fall. Certainly, Pound rejected it in his attempt to amalgamate the techniques of imagism with the genre of epic.

The inconsistencies in Hulme's thinking are illustrated in these poems. The first quoted certainly seems to have as its subject a vague impression, though whether or not it is successfully conveyed may be disputed. But this and the other poems are contaminated by an imprecision of vocabulary, a tendency to abstract rather than concrete language, even to cliche, which runs counter to much of Hulme's own writing, especially those arguments which Pound and the later Imagists took up and developed.

A confusion which persists throughout Hulme's work is his failure to make (it) clear whether the artist is attempting to represent something (he has) seen or an emotion felt. The basic problem is whether emotions can be distinguished from sensations, or whether in fact all emotions, intuitions, feelings, can be reduced to sensations. If a pure sensationalism is adopted then we have a view of the mind like Locke's tabula rasa and the artist will endeavour to reproduce the external and physical causes of his own sensation in order to impress it on other minds. Hulme insists forcefully on the physical or visual image, arguing that poetry is "not a counter language but a visual concrete one ... It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you see continuously a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process".[48] Though in one respect this passage reflects the distrust of positivism,

and at the same time it shows the influence of positivist scientific method with its demands for observables and for objective knowledge. The insistence on the visual image and on accurate observation may overwhelm the original notion that the image itself is merely the best correspondence to an intuition or subjective emotion of the artist, so that we arrive at a sort of neo-realism which aspires to the same objectivity as did the scientists. However, the poets cannot beat the scientists at this particular game and the attempt arises from a distrust and rejection of emotional or spiritual life, a materialist philosophy which is inert and, (quite simply), inadequate as an account of our experience.

Nevertheless, demands for the accurate recording of external particulars as exemplified in Pound's parable of Agassiz and the fish, did have a stringently beneficial effect on poetry.

A post-graduate student equipped with honours and diplomas went to Agassiz to receive the final and finishing touches. The great man offered him a small fish and told him to describe it.

Post-Graduate Student: 'That's only a sunfish'.

Agassiz: 'I know that. Write a description of it'.

After a few minutes the student returned with the description of the Ichthus Heliodiplodokus, or whatever term is used to conceal the common sunfish from vulgar knowledge, family of Heliichtherinkus, etc., as found in text-books of the subject.

Agassiz again told the student to describe the fish.

The student produced a four-page essay. Agassiz then told him to look at the fish. At the end of three weeks the fish was in an advanced state of decomposition, but the student knew something about it.[49]

"Pound had sought a cure of tongues by the discipline of the eye, some restraint that would keep words grounded in meaning",[50] said Robert Duncan. However, he argues that while for Amy Lowell and the cruder, literalist Imagists the "image was imitative of sensory appearances, for Pound and H.D.-- as, too, for Lawrence and Williams -- the image was a vision of reality".[51] This statement entails a belief in the reality of the world as well as of the vision and of the image. In process poetics, energy is

the fundamental reality of which vision, image and physical phenomena are different forms, none of which is less real than the others. Process and energy are the ultimate unity underlying the division between matter and spirit. For Williams and the Objectivists this meant a new dignity for the physical object as a form of energy, an idea made concrete as well as a new concept of the work of art as itself an object among other objects of the world, charged with and communicating energy. For the poets of process the relationship of inner to outer, of sensation and emotion is no longer a problem of inexplicable equivalencies but an intersection of forces in a creative event. Pound, in an oft-quoted phrase, speaks of the moment when "a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective".[52] This moment, itself an event will transfer its energy through process to the latter event of the poem. In Olson's words "A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it (he will have some several causations), by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader. Okay. Then the poem itself must, at all points, be a high-energy construct and, at all points, an energy-discharge".[53] Art is not detached from life or action, it is part of the action, and as such a force for articulation and intensity of organisation.

This process theory of poetry overcomes the difficulties inherent in Eliot's notion of the "objective correlative" which is in essence a formulation of the dualistic, Bergsonian view.

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that <u>particular</u> emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.[54]

This interpretation of art relies upon a correspondence between emotion and image and between the image and the words which formulate it. Yet, as Kermode reminds us, we must now admit "that words are not pictures, that words

behave differently from things" and therefore we are obliged to accept as an act of faith that other minds are like our own and that our words will be the same for them as for us and stimulate in them the same emotions. Such a view implies a spiritual or religious faith in an underlying essential reality behind the multiple and fleeting phenomena of the world of appearance, a reality which poetry can reach by manipulating perceptions of appearances through the operation of fancy. This theory which accords more or less with Hulme's version of Imagism differs from the later development initiated by Pound where appearances are real and where the emphasis is placed on the poet's duty to record that reality with a full recognition that it is an intersection of inner and outer, of subjective and objective forces.

T.E. Hulme's writings are unsystematic and often contradictory. His harsher critics have said that he was an intellectual journalist whose sole distinction lay in his knowledge of French and German. But it is the very ability of the journalist to reflect and popularise topical concerns and movements which makes Hulme's work so central to the modernist movement in English and American poetry. He undoubtedly influenced Ezra Pound as well as the lesser-known Imagists, and held for a short time a sort of salon at 67 Frith Street which was frequented by most of the leading artists and writers of the day, including Gaudier-Brzeska, Epstein, Wyndham Lewis, Pound, Orage, Richard Aldington, F.S. Flint, J.G. Fletcher and others. He was one of the first to propagate the ideas not only of Bergson, but also of Worringer, Husserl and other European writers. By his lectures and his articles in The New Age he contributed to the intellectual climate of the day, which nourished, among other fellow-contributors, High MacDiarmid. The posthumous publication of Speculations had a considerable influence on T.S. Eliot, which he acknowledged.

Hulme and others turned to Bergson because he seemed to offer a metaphysics capable of including art and science, of dealing with evolution and scientific relativism without discarding human freedom or absolute values. But while Bergson acknowledged flux or process, he established a

radical dualism based on a dichotomy between space and time which was bound to prove unacceptable, except perhaps from the religious viewpoint. Moreover, many of the empirical theories on which much of his philosophy is based now seem curiously outdated. The space-time dichotomy has been superceded by the four-dimensional space-time continuum. His arguments about memory and perception are based on a discredited theory about the nature of the correlation between psychic states and physical states of the brain. His speculations on the course of evolution are based on very shaky empirical evidence.[55]

Nevertheless, while Bergson's system has not survived either as a satisfactory philosophy of science or of art, his ideas have undoubtedly been fruitful for poetry. Curiously, given his own comments about art, it is probably his description of durations and evolution which have meant most to poets, as they attempt to create the dynamic image and the poem which lives and continues to evolve. The notion of flux would be replaced by that of process, the elan vital by the concept of energy, but Bergson must be recognised as an important source for the new theories of organismic, kinetic art.

CHAPTER ONE: FOOTNOTES.

1 Bertrand Russell, The Philosophy of Bergson with a reply by H. Wildon Carr and a rejoinder by Mr. Russell (Cambridge, 1914) p.24.

2 Raissa Maritain, quoted by Enid Starkie in "Bergson and Literature" in The Bergsonian Heritage edited by Thomas Hanna (New York, 1962) p.82. See also Raissa Maritain, We Have Been Friends Together translated by Julie Kernan (New York, 1943).

3 T.E. Hulme, Further Speculations edited by Sam Hynes (Minneapolis, 1955). p.41-42

4 Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution (translated by Arthur Mitchell (London, 1911) p.135.

5 See F.C. Copleston, Aquinas (Harmondsworth, 1955) Chapter IV.

6 Quoted by T.E. Hulme in "Notes on Bergson" in Further Speculations, p.47.

7 Further Speculations, p.48.

8 Creative Evolution, p.362.

9 Charles Olson, "Human Universe" in Human Universe and Other Essays edited by Donald Allen (New York, 1967) p.4.

10 T.E. Hulme, "Bergson's Theory of Art" in Speculations edited by Herbert Read (London, 1924) p.147.

11 Speculations, p.158-159.

12 Speculations [illegible] London, [illegible] pp.177-178.

13 Henri Bergson, Time and Free Will (London, 1910) p.95

14 Time and Free Will, p.98.

15 Time and Free Will, p.104.

16 Speculations, pp.221-222.

17 Creative Evolution, p.23.

18 "Intensive Manifolds", in Speculations, p.195.

19 Speculations, p.147.

20 Speculations, pp.152, 156.

21 Introduction to Metaphysics, p.76.

22 Time and Free Will, p.15.

23 Time and Free Will, p.18.

24 Speculations, p.150.

25 Speculations, p.152.

26 P.B. Shelley in "A Defence of Poetry" in The Four Ages of Poetry edited by H.F.B. Brett-Smith (Oxford, 1921), p.26.

27 See Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth translated by Suzanne Langer (New York, 1964).

28 Speculations, p.162.

29 Speculations, p.164.

30 Speculations, p.132.

31 Speculations, p.147.

32 Speculations, p.149.

33 Further Speculations, p.68.

34 Speculations, p.139.

35 Speculations, p.140.

36 Speculations, pp.75-109.

37 Speculations, p.86.

38 Speculations, p.51-52.

39 Speculations, p.91.

40 Speculations, p.70.

41 Speculations, p.37.

42 Speculations, p.35.

43 Speculations, p.96.

44 Further Speculations, p.71. (emphasis mine)

45 Further Speculations, p.73.

46 Further Speculations, p.72.

47 "Complete Poetical Works of T.E. Hulme" published as an appendix to Speculations, pp.265-267.

48 Speculations, p.134.

49 Ezra Pound, The ABC of Reading (London, 1951) pp.17-18.

50 Robert Duncan "Beginnings", Chapter I, Part I of the H.D. Book in Coyote's Journal, 5/6 (1966) p.18.

51 Duncan, p.16.

52 Ezra Pound in "Vorticism", extract reprinted in Ezra Pound, Penguin Critical Anthology, edited by J.P. Sullivan (Harmondsworth, 1970) p.54.

53 Charles Olson, Projective Verse in The Poetics of the New American Poetry edited by Donald Allen and Warren Tallman (New York, 1973) p.148.

54 T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems" in The Sacred Wood (London, 1972) pp.100-101.

55 See Bergson and the Evolution of Physics edited by P.A.Y. Gunter (Knoxville, Tennessee, 1969). Contains articles by Louis de Broglie and others as well as a discussion between Bergson, Einstein and Henri Pieron. See also Thomas Hanna in his introduction to The Bergsonian Heritage.

CHAPTER TWO

IMAGISTS, VORTICISTS AND EZRA POUND

Many accounts, scholarly, historical and critical, have been written of Imagism, and each disagrees with the last. This reflects the extraordinary vigour and richness of intellectual debate between 1908 and 1916, which while it may have involved comparatively few in numbers, compensated in the intensity and diversity of its philosophical and artistic ideas. It is almost impossible to pick one's way through the various schools and factions of the period. Often these overlapped, both in time and membership. Bloomsbury co-operated with the Vorticists until Wyndham Lewis and Roger Fry quarrelled. The Imagists sprang from the Poets' Club and both had links with survivors from Yeats's Rhymers' Club. The same man, Harold Munro[1], published Rupert Brooke and "Des Imagistes". T.E.Hulme's Frith Street salon was open to Walter Sickert and to Gaudier-Brzeska. Ford Madox Ford sat at the feet of Henry James and Joseph Conrad, but rolled at the feet of Ezra Pound.[2] The same faces were to be seen eating buns with A.R. Orage in an A.B.C. restaurant as he discussed the final shape of the week's issue of The New Age as might be discovered later in the sophisticated drawing-room of Brigit Patmore, or in Violet Hunt's salon at South Lodge.[3] The theoretical differences between the groupings are equally difficult to distinguish, for, again, the developments of individual members resulted in overlapping positions and modified beliefs. The imagists and futurists distinguished themselves from symbolists and impressionists and even more fiercely, they differentiated between each other. Yet as early as 1930, Ford Madox Ford lumps together futurism, cubism, vorticism and expressionism and in the long term most of their differences will warrant only a footnote in the history of art.[4]

The aim of this chapter will be to show that the notion of the image held by the Imagists and enshrined by their various manifestoes tended to emphasize the realistic or representational side of art, insisting on accurate rendering of the concrete at the expense of underlying patterns or forms and of the interaction of subject and object. This emphasis was technically salutary, but in the end the theory proved too crude to account even for the best Imagist poems. The force of the Imagist claims were dissipated in the recapitulations of later anthologies,[5] while the real advances came from Pound and his fusion of Imagism with the Vorticism of Wyndham Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska. After a brief outline of the history of Imagism I shall examine the movement's main tenets and discuss a number of Imagist poems in an effort to analyze just how the image can operate. From there I shall move to a consideration of Vorticism in an attempt to discover how Hulme's claim that:

> The opinion you often hear expressed, that perhaps a new poet will arrive who will synthesize the whole modern movement into a great epic, shows an entire misconception of modern verse.[6]

could be superseded by Pound's note:

> I am often asked whether there can be a long Imagiste or vorticist poem. The Japanese, who evolved the haiku, evolved the Noh plays. In the best 'Noh' the whole play may consist of one image, enforced by movement and music. I see nothing against a long vorticist poem.[7]

Imagism, in the first instance, developed from the Poets' Club founded by T.E.Hulme in 1908. F.S.Flint wrote a piece in The New Age condemning the tameness and excessive formality of the Club, and this, curiously, led to a friendship between Flint and Hulme, with the latter's secession from his own club and the formation of a breakaway group which met in the Eiffel Tower restaurant. The members of this group included Hulme, F.S. Flint, F.W. Tancred, Florence Farr, Joseph Campbell, Edward Storer and, after the third or fourth meeting, Ezra Pound.

Flint, Hulme and Storer were probably the most important influences on this early band of Imagists. Hulme's role has already been discussed. Flint played a major part in introducing contemporary French poetry into England. Indeed, he and later John Gould Fletcher, became the foremost authorities on the post-symbolist schools, and it was largely through them that Ezra Pound became aware of the French movements.

Flint is an attractive character. Reared in abject poverty, he educated himself sufficiently to become a career civil servant, and in his spare time, one of the most informed critics of avant-garde poetry in the early twentieth century. He was also a minor poet, basically a romantic, though his best or his best-known verse was stiffened by Imagist doctrines. As poetry critic for The New Age from 1908 to 1910 Flint reviewed a wide range of poetry including Japanese haiku which were to be of considerable importance to the Imagists. His chief interest remained French poetry, which he reviewed systematically and inclusively in The New Age, Poetry Review and Poetry and Drama. Like Hulme, he was influenced by Tancrède de Visan's L'Attitude du Lyrisme Contemporain, a Bergsonian account of symbolism. For de Visan, the poem of juxtaposed images could exteriorize a lyric intuition. This differed from the symbolism of Mallarmé, for instance, whose poems attempted to render a non-empirical and ineffable "idea". Cyrena Pondrom sees this as representing "the tendency to accommodate the conflicting demands of positivism and idealistic symbolism",[8] an effort which was important to the post-symbolist poets and the Imagists as they attempted to adapt to a world-view in which the philosophy of positivist science seemed to loom so large.

According to Flint, Edward Storer also played a considerable part in the debates of the "forgotten school of 1909".[9]

> There was also a lot of talk and practice among us, Storer leading it chiefly, of what we call the Image. We were very much influenced by modern French symbolist poetry.[10]

Storer in particular was more of a post-symbolist than an Imagist proper, as is shown by his verse and an essay, highly thought of at the time, in Mirrors of Illusion. In this essay, "Poetry, Narrative and Drama", Storer advocated a pure poetry free from the coarser, prosaic elements of drama or narrative. Good poetry was made up of images and fragments:

> On close analysis, it seems to be made up of scattered lines, which are pictures, descriptions or suggestions of something at present incapable of accurate identification, yet nevertheless convincing enough to some one portion of the brain; to be accepted as true by all the rest. Mirages, as it were, for whose essential verity, outside the illusion and circumstances of ordinary, everyday life, we have only the insistent and unexplainable protest of some kind of sixth sense. In a word, symbolism and symbols but an unconscious non-arbitrary symbolism for which we have no key.[11]

Storer, unlike Flint, was never an Imagiste, but the two poets have much in common, both harkening back to the less brutally concrete poetry of the Nineties and the Decadents. We may notice in the last sentence quoted here, the suggestion that symbols are not arbitrary, though whether their necessity derives from human psychology or is an external law of nature is not made clear. Storer was also an early propagandist for free verse drawing his ideas from Romantic concepts of organic form. His essay argues that verse form should be dictated by "vital, inherent necessities" rather than a "rigid mould" and concludes with an interesting recommendation that blank verse be "cut up" typographically according to phrasing in order to assist both ear and eye.

Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford) played an important and often underestimated role as a sort of godfather of letters to young writers throughout this period, including Lawrence, Pound and Wyndham Lewis, all of whom he published in The English Review. In his introduction to the 1930 Imagist Anthology, he claims some credit for Imagism:

> I like to think that my ceaseless hammerings on the note that the word, written or spoken, has energies that transgress the limits of the letters that cage or the sounds that cabine it ... I like to think that my hammering on that note and also on the other notes - that emotions have their own peculiar cadences and that poetic ideas are best expressed by the renderings of concrete objects - had their effects on the promoters of this slender and lovely little Movement. (p.xiii)

Ford picks out what he considers to be the main features of Imagism. Apart from the emphasis on the power of the word which has a vorticist ring, we notice the leaning towards accuracy in language, "I desired to see English become at once more colloquial and more exact"; towards free verse, "verse more fluid and exacting of its practitioners", and towards treatment of concrete, external phenomena, "and above all, as I have said, that it should be realised that poetry, æs it were, dynamically is a matter of rendering, not comment".[12]

Ezra Pound claimed that Imagism was founded to launch the poetry of H.D. Nevertheless, by the time Des Imagistes was published in 1914, the doctrine for the Manifestoes had already been well established. The famous propagandist piece "Imagisme" which appeared in Poetry (Chicago) March 1913 over the signature of F.S. Flint was in fact largely the work of Ezra Pound. It published for the first time the notorious rules of Imagism:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing", whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.

In addition to these tenets, there was also a certain "Doctrine of the Image which they had not committed to writing; they said that it did not concern the public, and would provoke useless discussion". This should perhaps be regarded as a piece of bravado symptomatic of an age-old taste for secret societies and Orphic doctrines which at the same time served to mask basic uncertainties among the Imagist them-

selves as to what the Image actually was. Certainly, it has been provoking discussion ever since. It will be worthwhile to examine each of these rules briefly, in order to establish more firmly the general character of Imagism(e) and to discover the limitations which led to its decline and to Pound's development of his own vortex-image.

The first rule stresses again, in spirit if not actually in the letter, that the Imagists preferred to treat of the concrete, to present external objects which would be adequate symbols for "lyric intuitions", subjective experiences, "moments of real time" or whatever. Even at this stage, however, they realised that the simple representation of objects in an accurate and naturalistic way was a less than satisfactory prescription. Hence, they posit a "thing" which may be "subjective or objective", thereby robbing these terms of effective meaning. If the "thing" which is to be directly treated is objective, it is presumably some aspect of the external world which is to be rendered as accurately and with as little interference from the personality as possible. This is comprehensible, though it minimizes the uncomfortable fact that all perceptions are selections, mediated by individual circumstance and personality. But what, we ask, is a subjective thing? is it an emotion, like love or hate, or is it perhaps a thought? If so, how can it be rendered except indirectly through objective correlatives, or through the despised descriptive abstractions? Perhaps a thought might be represented in the language or symbols of logic, though again these are conventions. The conclusion to be drawn, and which Pound drew, is that the "thing" to be treated is neither subjective, but a fusion of the two.

> In a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective.[13]

The confusion inherent in this first rule does spring from the desire of the poets for a positivist approach, a wish that they too, like the scientists could work with the real "facts" of the material world, rather than the ideas and emotions which had been so devalued by mechanistic empiricism.

The second rule also has affinities with scientific method, advocating precision and economy of means in presentation. Interpretations of this rule may be found in Pound's writings and in the Imagist prefaces. The essence of this rule is the search for the "exact" word, the word which presents rather than decorates. The preface to the second volume of Some Imagist Poets attempted to expand on this and thereby raised a number of difficulties which it could not resolve, again concerning the nature of the "image":

> The "exact" word does not mean the word which exactly describes the object in itself, it means the "exact" word which brings the effect of that object before the reader as it presented itself to the poet's mind at the time of writing the poem. Imagists deal but little with similes, although much of their poetry is metaphorical. The reason for this is that while acknowledging the figure to be an integral part of all poetry, they feel that the constant imposing of one figure upon another in the same poem blurs the central effect.[14]

It is consistent for Imagist doctrine to eschew simile, felt to be more descriptive or decorative than metaphor, but the rejected device of imposing one figure on another seems, on the other hand, to be the essence of metaphor and central to Imagist practice, as in "Oread" or "The Garden" by H.D., Pound's "In a Station of the Metro", or Aldington's "Sunset". Moreover, Pound, Aldington and even H.D. wrote many imagist poems which turn on a simile:

> Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall
> She walks by the railing of a path
> -Pound, "The Garden"

> As cool as the pale wet leaves
> of lily-of-the-valley
> She lay beside me in the dawn.
> -Pound, "Alba"

Her fingers were like the tissue
Of a Japanese paper napkin

-Pound, "The Encounter"

You quiver like a sea-fish

-H.D., "The Pond"

O rose, cut in rock
hard as the descent of hail

-H.D. "The Garden" (metaphor and simile)

She has new leaves
After her dead flowers,
Like the little almond tree
Which the frost hurt.

-Aldington, "New Love"

The blue smoke leaps
Like swirling clouds of birds vanishing.
So my love leaps towards you
Vanishes and is renewed.

-Aldington, "Images (2)"

In this last poem we have direct treatment of an emotional state through the indirect figures of simile and analogy.

Insouciance

In and out of the dreary trenches
Trudging cheerily under the stars
I make for myself little poems
Delicate as a flock of doves

They fly away like white-winged doves.

-Aldington[15]

This poem moves almost incongruously from its opening Browningesque to the Japanese delicacy of its conclusion. Again it employs an explicit simile, stated and then elaborated.

It might be argued that these similes are not decorative, but essential and therefore closer to what we normally think of as metaphor. This returns us to the difficulty of distinguishing between description and presentation. This may be a matter of intensity;[16] "presenting the object" or "rendering the image" meant achieving

sufficient vividness in language to arouse in the reader the same emotion or sensation as that experienced by the poet. Once more, this is easier to understand if we conceive the poet's task to be the presentation of the "external" object; for then if he succeeds in presenting an object, recreating it as it appeared to him, he will induce in the reader an experience or sensation which is pre-conceptual and non-abstract. If, on the other hand, he succeeds only in describing the object, the reader's apprehension will be conceptual and the knowledge he acquires will conform with his received ideas and categories. The "exact" word, or the words which contribute to the presentation must therefore be fresh, figures vivid or unexpected, as Hulme suggested; otherwise the poem collapses into the mere description of "symbolic" or "counter" language.

However, if the subjective experience of the author is itself held to be the "thing" for presentation, we return to the problem of symbolism. The reader is distanced from the experience not only by the inherent symbolism of language but by the introduction of external or material equivalents to the subjective experience of the author. Only if notions of exactness and economy are applied to the presentation of the form, "idea" or structure of the experience which can be transmitted through different media, paint, sculpture, music words, may the valves of directness be preserved. Superficially, an emphasis on form would seem to run counter to the primary thrust of Imagism until it is realised that the accurate perception of form is that which determines the selection of the concrete and specific images to be presented. (This emphasis on what is transmitted through art should not obscure the autonomy and specificity of the work of art in itself.) In any case, the second rule of Imagism, like the others was not intended to be explored for its metaphysical implications; it too was a stylistic directive, intended to bring about a pruning

of poetic diction and verbose generalities. This is clear from Pound's "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste":

> Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something.
>
> Don't use such an expression as "dim lands of peace". It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer not realizing that the natural object is always the adequate symbol.[16]

Several critics have commented on how much of the various Imagist proclamations and articles are taken up by arguments over vers libre, rhythm, metric, etc. By the time of the 1916 anthology Imagism under Amy Lowell had allied itself firmly with vers libre, the theory of which was inspired by contemporary French experiment. Pound never sanctioned the looser notions of free verse, though his theory of the "musical phrase" may have been regarded as licence for some of the century's more formless productions. In his article "Re Vers Libre" (1917) he attributed the interest in free verse to a desire to return to quantitative measure:

> I think one should write vers libre only when one 'must', that is to say, only when the 'thing' builds up a rhythm more beautiful than that of set metres, or more real, more a part of the emotion of the 'thing', more germane, intimate, interpretative than the measure of regular accentual verse; a rhythm which discontents one with set iambic or set anapaestic. ...
> I mean I do not think one can use to any advantage rhythms much more tenuous and imperceptible than some I have used. I think progress lies rather in an attempt to approximate classical quantitative metres (NOT to copy them) than in a carelessness regarding such things.[17]

Yet in 1918 he asserted again his belief in "an absolute rhythm, a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed. A man's rhythm must be interpretative, it will be, therefore, in the end, his own, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable".[18] It is to be noted that this statement by no means renounces the use of measure, not even the traditional measures of the past, for it has always been possible for the poet to impose his own rhythm on tradi-

tional forms. On the other hand, it does permit wide experiment in the search for the rhythm which will best correspond to or embody that which is to be expressed. Two further points emerge from this statement: the first is that rhythm and measure are part of the organism of the poem, and the second is the impossibility of separating subject from object. The rhythm of the poem will be conditioned by the individuality, even by the physiological individuality of the perceiver as well as by the particular identity of what is perceived. These two points were to be important for later American poets like Williams, Olson and Creeley.

Pound, in common with other poets of the time, was of course affected by the experiments of the French vers librists and commented on them in his Approach to Paris series published in The New Age during 1913, where he showed an open mind to a wide range of styles. In his concluding article, he praised the achievement of the French poets, particularly in regard to rhythm which he defined thus:

> Dante defined poetry as a composition of words set to music. With the passage of the centuries poetry has been gradually removed from the art of music, as the term 'music' is generally used, i.e. from melody of pitch variation. The art of music which still remains to the poet is that of rhythm, and of a sort of melody dependent on the order and arrangement of varied vowel and consonantal sounds. The rhythm is a matter of duration of individual sounds and of stress, and the matter of the 'word melody' depends largely on the fitness of this duration and stress to the sounds where with it is connected.[19]

This statement is important because it carries in it Pound's conviction that rhythm and measure were as intrinsic to a poem as images or the elements of discourse, the three aspects which he was later to analyse as melopoeia, phanopoeia and logopoeia. Furthermore, the stress on quantity and duration reveals Pound's emphasis on the poem itself as an event, moving through time. The poem cannot be still as a painting or sculpture is still; it does not "fix" the intuition or thing, object or experience,

but rather recreates it in a form which is appropriate. This insight was to be of value in the formulation of Vorticism and the writing of The Cantos. The post-1914 Imagists, represented chiefly by Aldington and Amy Lowell, repeated and adulterated some of Pound's strictures on rhythm and metre, while at the same time embracing the gamut of vers libre practice. The discussion of rhythm and form, point 2 in the 1915 anthology, which may be traced back to Hulme and Storer in 1909, says nothing new:

> (2) To create new rhythms - as the expression of new moods - and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon 'free-verse' as the only method of writing poetry. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea.

Free verse is further defined as "all that increasing amount of writing whose cadence is more marked, more definite, and closer knit than that of prose, but which is not so violently nor so obviously accented as the so-called 'regular verse'. We refer those interested in the question to the Greek Melic poets, and to the many excellent French studies on the subject by such distinguished and well-equipped authors as Rémy de Gourmont, Gustave Kahn, Georges Duhamel, Charles Vildrac, Henri Gheon, Robert de Souza, Andre Spire". Perhaps the very inclusiveness of this list reveals the dissipation of the original force of Imagism. The 1916 Preface further expands the notion of "cadenced" verse with a profusion of images and analogies which is another indication of the impoverishment of the movement and its debts to stronger theoreticians both in Britain and France.

The main force of Imagism was, as we have said, corrective and those principles which were most agreed on were those concerned with poetic craftsmanship, technique and style. On the other matters, particularly those relating to the concept of the "Image" which gave the movement its name, the manifestoes and proclamations remained, deli-

berately or perforce, vague and indefinite. Though this central uncertainty may have provided sufficient latitude for the publication of three anthologies, it meant that the stated Imagist doctrines were in the end inadequate to account for the best work of their own practitioners. By looking more closely at a few poems generally regarded as Imagist, we shall discover these inadequacies and the many discrepancies between various approaches to the Image.

According to F.S. Flint, Edward Storer was one of the first to write in the Imagist manner,[20] and certainly the first poem in his Mirrors of Illusion was called simply, "Image":

> Forsaken lovers
> Burning to a chaste white moon
> Upon strange pyres of loneliness and drought.

It was with reference to Storer's poetry, which he called "porridge",[21] that Pound distinguished between "Impressionism", the proto-Imagism of 1908-1909 and Imagisme proper. If we compare this poem with H.D.'s "Oread" which Pound considered the epitome of Imagiste poetry, we shall be able to discover some of the differences between the two schools. However, these distinctions can never be clear-cut, since many of the avowedly "Imagiste" poems harken back to the earlier manner which has closer affinities with symbolism and impressionism.[22]

Here is H.D.'s "Oread":

> Whirl up, sea -
> Whirl your pointed pines
> Splash your great pines
> On our rocks,
> Hurl your green over us,
> Cover us with your pools of fir.[23]

Each of these poems presents an image, in each case a compound image whose simpler elements we may partially analyze. Both poems reveal how much the image depends on analogy or simile, or some sort of stated or implicit correspondance. This is the stuff of metaphor, which we may define, loosely, as any joining or equation of two

(or more) ideas or figures where the meaning and richness of each term is increased and where a new image or figure is projected as a synthesis or fusion of the original terms or parts. We may compare Stanley Coffman's description of Pound's Imagism.

> Again, the poem is a single metaphor or simile, a clear indication that the Imagist sought to achieve his poetic effect through the single, dominant figure. Both terms of the metaphor were images of phenomena, images bringing language close to the hard, physical object. The second term of the comparison was chosen for the variety of sensuous connotations which it could bring to bear on the first, especially striking impressions of color, light and shadow. If, as the illustrations implied, this single metaphor was intended to carry the poem, then an Imagist poem was necessarily brief - a point further underlined by the sensuous character of the associations evoked. However, Imagist practice did not wholly substantiate this, and the foact is that Pound's examples were to a certain extent misleading; he seemed to be explaining the image when actually he was explaining the Image - the total pattern, the organism or complex the poet succeeds in creating, a definition which could theoretically apply to a poem of any length - though the two meanings were in his mind closely related.[24]

The emergence of metaphor as the dynamic principle would prove crucial for Vorticist poetic and those later theories which make use of the concept of energy to provide a basis for the creation of a long poem. In an Imagist poem, the Image may be identical with its fundamental metaphor or it may be much more: the sum of the terms of the major metaphor together with its dependent sub-metaphors as well as the implications of the whole poem, including the nuances of poetic form, use of rhyme, rhythm, syntax, rhetoric and so on.

If we attempt to abstract the prose "sense" from Storer's poem we arrive at something like "To suffer the disappointments or frustrations of love is like being burnt on a bonfire". A subjective experience, the loss of love, is matched to a material, therefore public and communicable experience which is further substantiated by the widely shared knowledge of the Hindu custom of suttee. In the poem, both subjective and external or

objective terms are presented, but they are fused by the transfer of epithets: the moon acquires the enforced "chastity" of the lovers, the pyres are "strange" because the subjective emotion is strange; in any case, they are not real pyres but abstractions built up of "loneliness", again more appropriate to the lovers' experience, and "drought" which is neither a real "drought" nor a physical thirst, nor anything to do with an actual fire, but a spiritual lack experienced by the lover. The increasing abstraction of the poem reflects back on its beginning: we realise that the lovers are not actually burning but undergoing the torments of loss and sexual frustration; that they may not even have been physically forsaken, but rather are suffering mental or spiritual desertion. We recognize that there probably are no "lovers", that they are an objectification by the poet of a real or imagined emotion of his own, an objectification which enables him to move through various levels of concreteness and back to the final abstraction "loneliness and drought".

In the sense that it is an attempt to render a particular subjective feeling through a juxtaposition of words and figures which do not, objectively considered, have a natural connection this could be described as an "impressionist" poem. However, it is not impressionism in the sensationalist sense where the impression to be rendered is simply that recorded by the mind as a passive receiver of sense data from the external world. Clearly, the mind itself was active in the original experience, and in the presentation of the image, either the imagination or Hulme's deliberately applied faculty of "fancy" has acted to bring together the different ideas in the poem. The success of such juxtapositions will depend on the poet's skill and on a shared cultural heritage. Here, Storer's lightness of touch allows him to exploit the tradition of burning lovers and chaste moons without lapsing into cliché. The one failure seems to me the use of the word "strange" which adds nothing to our understanding of the

subjective feeling of the poem nor to our visualization of the objective picture. In its redundancy and vagueness it breaks not only the laws of 1913, but also offends against the precepts of Hulme and the 1909 school with their demands for accuracy, hard, dry poems and fresh images. Apart from this, it is a remarkably successful if somewhat enamelled image, conforming to Storer's own account of poetry, given above, and to the Bergsonian view of symbolism which Hulme accepted so enthusiastically in his review of Tancrede de Visan's L'Attitude du Lyrisme Contemporain:

> For life is a continuous but unanalysable curve which cannot be seized clearly, but can only be felt as a kind of intuition. It can **only** be got at by a kind of central vision as opposed to analytic description, this central vision expressing itself by means of symbols. M. Visan would then define Symbolism as an attempt by means of successive and accumulated images to express and exteriorize such a central intuition... It is very interesting to see how a complex thought like that of Bergson should be unconsciously anticipated and find a tentative expression in a purely literary form.[25]

Cyrena Pondrom points out that Hulme fails to emphasize De Visan's concern "to define the symbolist and Bergsonian achievement as the perception and communication of a higher, but empirical, realism".[26] Both schools of Imagism emphasized the need to escape from mysticism and neo-Platonic idealism. This was perhaps the result of an over-reaction to extremes of theosophy and the Celtic twilight on the one hand, and the aggressive common sense of positivism on the other. Even among those poets generally recognized to have been Imagists, many moved back to a semi-magical semi-religious belief in the power of poetry and the Word. The brusque no-nonsense tone of Hulme and Pound is an affectation, as much as a self-deluding device as a sign of real conviction. The Image remained a mystery.

Storer's poem may be regarded as Imagist, but it is an image in the post- or neo-symbolist manner, presented to suggest something which is itself inexpressible.

It thus conforms rather to Hulme's theory of poetics than to Pound's, for while it presumably derives from an intuition to which Storer, as a poet, was expected to be particularly susceptible, it is not that intuition, and while it may induce similar subjective experience in others there is no guarantee of this. All it can be said certainly to achieve is a fresh perception, a new way of looking at things, awareness of a previously unrecognized correspondance. For Pound, the connections between the poet's mind, the external world, the poem and the reader's mind had to become necessary, objectively real and effectual. Storer's poem agrees with Hulme's theory in another respect: it is a "fixed" impression, a stilled image. It takes its material from the flux of experience and confers upon it the stasis of art. So perhaps the image becomes an "idea", unchanging, perfected, but loses its actuality, its capacity for development. There could be no possibility of a long poem developing from a sealed-off image of this description.

If we turn to H.D.'s "Oread", we will discover a different sort of image, though there are important resemblances to that of Storer's poem. Again we are presented with a compound image whose terms may be analyzed and prosaically abstracted as "The sea is like a pine forest". In this case both sides of the equation are derived from the natural world, and the effort is not explicitly to match a subjective experience with an objective state of affairs but rather to present as accurately as possible a perceived correspondance between two natural phenomena. Here is direct treatment of the "thing". We notice the austerity of the diction, the absence of any words which could be considered abstract or related to the emotions. In the true positivist manner the language is confined to observables. Yet we cannot ignore the influence of the personality the interference of the subjective; this correspondance, no matter how objectively real, was selected and perceived by a

particular eye. The individual mind and ear of H.D. worked together to control the consonances and syllabic patterning which decide the linguistic form. Nor can we doubt that the whole image of the poem, Pound's "natural object" is a symbol, or an equivalent, for some subjective experience, be it merely the experience of an individual watching the waves.

But the form of the poem itself reveals more than this. The subjective aspect has been purged from the imagery only to creep into the form, the syntax, the vocative mode of the poem. Behind the first and natural antinomy of land and sea lurked a second, more subtle opposition of "you and us"; on the one hand, the vastness of nature in forest and ocean, on the other, frail and alienated humanity. The effect of the entire poem is to express the recognition of separateness and the longing for fusion, for the assumption of the human into the world of nature.

Thus a poem which seems at first sight the simple recording of a fleeting observation turns out to be what Pound was to call a Vortex, or a "radiant node", drawing into itself aesthetic, emotional and cosmic significances, radiating outwards other correspondances. In the theory of Robert Duncan, it would be recognized as part of the Great Poem, some of which is written, some of which is yet to be realized.[26] Storer's "Image", however, could not be part of a long poem unless some explanatory narrative were invented to sustain and place it. Here we have a crucial difference between two kinds of image, and two sorts of poetry. On the one hand, "closed verse" which aims at a crystallized perfection and springs from an aesthetic which regards art as wholly separate and different from life. As we recognized in the previous chapter this view is based on metaphysical dualism. On the other hand, we have what has come to be known as "open" or "projective" verse where art, like mind, is part of the natural world and interacts in time and space with the rest of nature.

In perhaps the most famous Imagist poem written by Pound a similar process is revealed:

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.[27]

It was while describing the circumstances leading up to the composition of this poem in his article on Vorticism, Pound wrote, "In a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective".[28] Yet there is in this poem no direct mention of anything subjective. Both terms of the poem are public observables, images of phenomena.[29] What is new and constitutes the single image of the poem, is their equation and this equation is itself a part of the fusion of the subjective and objective. In other words, the image of the poem is an objective equivalent or natural symbol of an otherwise incommunicable experience. The difference between Pound's poem and Storer's is that Pound never refers directly to the subjective and inward.

We may distinguish four aspects of the imagist poem, often confused. First there is the triggering external experience in the life of the poet, in this case, a throng of travellers on the Paris metro; second, there is the subjective experience and emotions induced in the poet by this stimulus; third, is the attempt to render or record them which becomes an object, the poem; fourth, is the reader's subjective experience and emotions on reading the poem.[30] Each of these aspects could be and has been described as an "image". Yet these are not identical with each other and there is no <u>a priori</u> reason to suppose a necessary link or correspondance between them. The sceptic, and Hulme, for one, at times approached complete scepticism, would deny that there was any link, would deny the certainty of causality and hence deny the possibility of order or communication. For Pound, however, coherence in nature and the ability of the human mind to

discover and impose order, was, from the beginning, a first principle. Thus between the metro faces and their analogue, the petals, there would be a real relationship, whether already existent in nature or imposed by man, and that real relationship, objectified in the poem, would be communicable, at least in form. The form of the two elements of the image united in the poem imitates the fusion of the outward and objective with the inward and subjective, as well as conveying, through the unexpected natural image, the startling beauty originally experienced by the poet.

In the best Imagist poems an aspect of an external object is caught in words as freshly and accurately as possible. The resultant poem then stands independent of its creator, at once a "thing-in-itself" and a potential symbol with varying significances for different readers. The Imagists, like Pound and Eliot, wanted a work of art that could be appreciated before it was interpreted, though interpretation might deepen appreciation. In this they were trying to escape the pitfalls of hermetic symbolism, where elaborate systems and private mythologies tended to eliminate poetry. In the best work of the great symbolists such as Blake and Yeats, however, the poetry does convince on a level where a knowledge of the system is not required. Hence this stipulation was not innovatory but corrective. But the best examples of presentation of the image, untrammelled by overt subjectivism or symbolism, are found in the austere poetry of H.D., where the natural object is indeed the symbol, but at the same time sufficient in itself:

The Pool

Are you alive?
I touch you.
You quiver like a sea-fish.
I cover you with my net.
What are you - banded one?

This poem requires the title to denote its objective reference. The uncertainty the reader feels within the

poem itself about what is being presented is reflected in the last line, "What are you - banded one?" Thus the poem conforms to the theory of the 1916 anthology's preface, that the poem should imitate, even in form, whatever the author seeks to convey,

> "Imagism" refers to the manner of presentation, not to the subject. It means a clear presentation of whatever the author wishes to convey. Now he may wish to convey a mood of indecision, in which case the poem should be indecisive; he may wish to bring before his reader the constantly shifting and changing lights over a landscape, or the varying attitudes of a person under strong emotion, then his poem must shift and change to present this clearly.[31]

"The Pool" is about uncertainty, therefore it is uncertain and stirs a feeling of uncertainty in the reader. But the poem is also "about" the pool, seen in a certain way, at a certain moment. Its effectiveness rests in the meticulous recording of finely observed detail: "I touch you/You quiver like a sea-fish". We may say that this image of the pool has been discovered and presented as the natural symbol for one sort of uncertainty. The form of the poem and the way it operates upon the reader creates (or is) the connection between the subjective and objective. But this poem becomes much more than the objectification of a simple correspondance. The imagery through which the pool is described and the mode of address in which the poem is couched set off further reverberations for the reader. As in "Oread" there is an opposition between "you" and "us", self and not-self, inscrutable Nature and the sensitive subject. The poem is dynamic in that it continues to operate, setting off a chain of reflections. One perception leads "immediately and directly to a further perception"[32] as we move from the pool, to the simple emotion of uncertainty, to wider philosophical speculations about the nature of perception, about how much of what we perceive as pattern in nature is in fact pattern imposed by outselves, "I cover you with my net". It is a very fine poem, but its high quality perhaps reveals the poverty of official Imagist

theories and doctrines, for although it conforms to them it goes far beyond them. If we wish to discuss it adequately, we have to follow Pound into the world of dynamism, energy and Vorticism.

Vorticism itself must be understood in the context of art movements in the first two decades of the century. Poetic theory was much influenced by the arguments of the avant-garde painters and sculptors who succeeded the Impressionists. Hulme, we remember, particularly in the last years of his life, spent as much time in the company of artists - Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Wyndham Lewis - as of poets. Pound too was fascinated by art, by Wyndham Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska in particular. Wyndham Lewis's practice, when he was a Vorticist and when his interest in abstract or non-representative art was at its height, found successive apologists and interpreters in Hulme and Pound. With typical arrogance he asserted at different times, "What (Hulme) said should be done, I did. Or it could be more exact to say that I did it, and he said it", and "Vorticism, in fact, was what I, personally, did and said, at a certain period".[33]

A brief consideration of the ideas in art which led from impressionism to post-impressionism, expressionism, cubism, futurism and vorticism will throw light on contemporary problems in literature. This was a period of ferment in all the arts. Pound was not alone in sensing a "risorgimento".[34] In his autobigraphical writings, Lewis looked back to the period:

> It was after all a new civilisation that I - and a few other people - was making the blue-prints for ... A rough design for a way of seeing for men who as yet were not there ... It was more than just picture-making, one was manufacturing fresh eyes for people, and fresh souls to go with the eyes.[35]

John Berger, in his essay, "The Moment of Cubism" quotes D.H. Kahnweiler's description of the time:

I lived those seven crucial years from 1907 to 1914 with my painter friends ... what occurred at that time in the plastic arts will be understood only if one bears in mind that a new epoch was being born, in which man (all mankind) was undergoing a transformation more radical than any other known within historical times.

John Berger attempts to explain this wide-spread belief in socio-economic terms:

An inter-locking world-system of imperialism: opposed to it a socialist international: the founding of modern physics, physiology and sociology; the increasing use of electricity, the invention of radio and the cinema; the beginnings of mass production; the publishing of mass-circulation newspapers; the new structural possibilities offered by the availability of steel and aluminium; the rapid development of chemical industries and the production of synthetic materials; the appearance of the motor-car and the aeroplane:what did all this mean?

The question may seem so vast that it leads to despair. Yet there are rare historical momemnts to which such a question can perhaps be applied. These are moments of convergence, when numerous developments enter a period of similar qualitative change, before diverging into a multiplicity of new terms. Few of those who live through such a moment can grasp the full significance of the qualitative change taking place: but everybody is aware of the times changing: the future, instead of offering continuity, appears to advance towards them.[36]

It was the exhibitions of painting and sculpture which aroused the greatest furore and the theoretical debate which was to spill over into all artistic activity and which so much influenced Pound. In Blast, tracing the ancestry of Vorticism he concluded:

Picasso, Kandinsky, father and mother, classicism and romanticism of the movement.[37]

This statement reveals from what varied sources Vorticism in general, and Pound's own Vorticism in particular, was derived. It could be said to encompass some of the divergent terms emerging from the convergent moment of post-impressionism. But probably of greatest significance for

the vorticists, was the new emphasis on energy and form which allowed exploration of time and space instead of the representational and therefore mainly spatial art of impressionism and its predecessors. If it is accepted that Vorticism is not representational art in the naturalistic sense, there would seem to be some conflict with the Imagists' insistence on the external, on the rendering of the natural object. This insistence on externality was prompted by some of the same laudable motives as inspired Vorticism. It was an attempt to suppress excessive subjectivism, or self-indulgent emotion; it was a search for clear, hard definition in language comparable with the strong lines, massed blocks and bright colours of Vorticist art; it was modern and anti-romantic, even positivist in its effort to treat only observables, to avoid the pathetic fallacy, cosmic abstractions and all forms of subjectivism. But the extreme Imagist position proved to be both inadequate and absurd. From the beginning Pound had recognized the necessary subjective aspect of the image, "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time".[38] A completely objective "thing" can never be rendered in poetry (though the poem itself is an object); the stimulus or image from which the poem springs is inevitably a fusion of the outer, or physical, and inner, mental worlds. Thus a completely naturalistic art is impossible, since the object which is apparently represented will always be alloyed with the subjective experience of the artist. Realizing this the artist becomes more interested in exploring form, that which persists, ideally, apart from its medium, and provides the basis of the correspondance between natural phenomena, perceptions of them by different individuals, and their re-presentations or recreations in art.

It was the quest for enduring form which inspired Picasso and the analytical Cubists:

> What Picasso and Braque were aiming at was to get back to the durable form of the thing seen, by eliminating incidentals, bringing out as clearly as possible prototypal geometric forms ...
> ... the thing represented is never a specific object viewed under certain conditions, but a type object whose attributes are found in each of its successive individuations. Differing from his predecessors, the Cubist does not represent a single, necessarily arbitrary aspect of the subject, but seeks to reveal its basic constant properties. Not that his standpoint is one of immaterialist idealism. True, in one of his essays on Aesthetics (Sobre el punto de vista en las artes published in Revista de Occidente, February, 1924) Jose Ortega y Gasset says that all painting subsequent to Cezanne depicts ideas alone, and that while Ideas, too, are "objects" they are objects of a special kind, immanent in the subject and thus 'intrasubjective'. Cubism is idealist in the sense that it deals with types, but it is also and above all realistic, in the sense that it always keeps in close touch with the outside world. Though not a literal depiction, the cubist picture is an objective representation, and nothing could be more erroneous than to think the Cubist turns his back on nature.[39]

Such a position, the search to render the type instantiated in particular experiences of particular phenomena is found also in Pound's poetry. Indeed, the structure of The Cantos rests on the belief that there are types, recurrences, patterns in nature. As Donald Davie has pointed out,[40] in this sense The Cantos is a poem of ideas, of forms which are established by the patterning of their particular instances. Here too, Pound's notion of the "luminous detail" becomes relevant, though superficially it might seem to be the very opposite of the Cubist approach described above. This idea is first put forward in Pound's "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" series for the New Age, 1911-1912. The "luminous detail" is a "key" or "significant" fact which provides an insight into the circumstances of an entire historical period. Instancing a sentence from Burckhardt's history, "In this year the Venetians refused to make war on the Milanese because they held that any war between buyer and seller must prove profitable to neither", Pound continues:

> In the history of the development of civilisation or of literature we come upon such interpreting detail. A few dozen facts of this nature give us intelligence of a period - a kind of intelligence not to be gathered from a great array of facts of the other sort. These facts are hard to find. They are swift and easy of transmission. They govern knowledge as the switchboard governs an electric current.

The similarity of this energy metaphor to the later vortex is unmistakeable. The "luminous detail", like the vortex, is a nodal point which is charged with and can transmit energy. By plotting the "luminous details" in the history or the poem-epic the entire field of knowledge can be opened up. The system of nodal points is the equivalent, concretely presented, of the essential structure or form underlying events and appearances. Furthermore, not only can this system of relationships reach across time and space, it can also bridge the gap between the internal and external. The vortex itself may be a fusion of subjective and objective, or correspondances may be established between subjective and historical experiences, between patterns of events in nature, in history and in one's own life-time. The vorticist poem can be an organic whole whose parts are bounded by their reciprocal relations, but at the same time it has the potential to enter into further relations or establish further correspondances within a larger work, with the world, or with successive readers. Thus the work of art, though an autonomous whole is not hermetically sealed; it can relate to further events as the world continues and so communicate to successive readers. This is the method of The Cantos.

Pound's most important theoretical exposition of Vorticism comes in his book on Gaudier-Brzeska. Pound was impressed by the sculptor's own formulations of Vorticism which appeared originally in Blast, and which he reprints in the memoir. He was particularly struck by the sweeping historical and racial generalizations on which Gaudier-Brzeska based his art history, generalizations reminiscent of the systems of German philosophers, Hegel, Spengler and even Wilhelm Worringer the art-historian.

His interpretation of different eras in terms of differenly shaped vortices appealed to Pound no less than his fundamental assertion that the Vortex was energy, a notion reinforced by the vehemence of its statement:

VORTEX IS ENERGY! and it gave forth SOLID EXCREMENTS in the quattro é cinque centos, LIQUID until the seventeenth century, GASES whistle till now. THIS is the history of form value in the West until the FALL OF IMPRESSIONISM.

The second manifesto which Gaudier-Brzeska sent from the trenches contained one of his most significant statements, at least as far as Pound was concerned:

I SHALL DERIVE MY EMOTIONS SOLELY FROM THE ARRANGEMENT OF SURFACES; I shall present my emotions by the ARRANGEMENTS OF MY SURFACES; THE PLANES AND LINES BY WHICH THEY ARE DEFINED.[41]

This insistence on art as form and form itself as the arrangement of constituent elements in relation to each other was carried over by Pound to the other arts, music and poetry:

I am aware that most people cannot feel form "musically". That they get no joy, no thrill from an arrangement of planes. That they have no nense of form. I mean the form of things, as distinct from composition of a form or of a statue...
The pine-tree in mist upon the far hill looks like a fragment of Japanese armour.
The beauty of this pine-tree in the mist is not caused by its resemblance to the plate of the armour.
The armour, if it be beautiful at all, is not beautiful because of its resemblance to the pine in the mist.
In either case, the beauty in so far as it is beauty of form, is the results of "planes in relation".
The tree and the armour are beautiful because their diverse planes overlie in a certain manner.

Applying this formulation (itself a prose poem) to poetry, Pound continues:

...The poet, whatever his "figure of speech", will not arrive by doubling or confusing an image.
Still the artist, working in words only, may cast on the reader's mind a more vivid image of either the armour or the pine by mentioning them close together or by using some device of simile or metaphor, that ia a legitimate procedure of his art, for he works not with planes or with colours but with the names of objects and of properties. It is his business so to use, so to arrange, these names as to cast a more definite image than the layman can cast;[42]

This passage suggests that the images of a poem should have the clear, hard outlines favoured by the Imagists. In order that the overlap in forms of particular things may be revealed, those things must be rendered in all their particularity. We may note also that the argument assumes the reality of the physical world and its availability for perception and knowledge. The poem is not simply a collection of these "real" things, but a representation of them and the relations between them. These relations are matters of form and can be established through the formal arrangements of the poem. It is the formal configuration which can be translated from one medium to another, which can be communicated from one mind to another through art. This formal relationship may be described as the image or the vortex.

> The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing. In decency one can only call it a VORTEX. And from this necessity came the name "vorticism". Nomina sunt consequentia rerum, and never was that statement of Aquinas more true in the case of the vorticist movement.[43]

If we turn back to H.D.'s "The Pool" we will recognize it as a vorticist poem of which this is a fair description. As we saw earlier, different elements - the pool, fish, net, narrator - are brought together in a particular manner to form the "radiant node or cluster". The medium by which this cluster is conveyed is language, certain words which are the names of objects and properties, arranged in a certain order; the poem is thus other than the first-hand experience but can transmit or reproduce its formal relationships. Initially, ideas are communicated to us from the poem-vortex; later, depending on the strength of the poem, we read ideas into it, as I have read into this poem the question about the ultimate relationship between perceiver and perceived. Eventually, the poem is recognized to conform to patterns discerned in other areas of experience and itself takes up a place in relation to the total experience. Perhaps the image is not an idea, at least in the general or abstract sense. It is rather the

concrete universal, the instantiation of an ideal form in the particular. There can be no image until there is a realization, but what is realized, what provides the poem with its pattern and significance is the ideal form.[44]

The most prominent features of the concept of the vortex were energy and stillness. Although it receives and transmits energy, thus promoting activity and fulfilling its place in a dynamic universe, the vortex itself is still. Poems or pictures may represent movement, but they do not themselves move. However, the total separation of art and life is avoided by the concept of the radiant node, of the work of art as a configuration receiving and transmitting energy. Herein lay the difference between the Cubists and Vorticists on one side and the Futurists on the other. The Futurists were equally preoccupied by energy and movement; they wanted their work to live. But instead of seeking the hard lines and formal patterns of a Wyndham Lewis painting or the analysis of a cubist work by Braque or Picasso, formal patterns which are analyses and thus communications of shape and movement in space and time, the Futurists - Marinetti, Severini, Nevinson - sought to represent superficial movement by cinematographic techniques such as blurred and superimposed images. This, at any rate, was the substance of the charges made against them by their rivals, the argument which lay behind Pound's designation of Futurism as "accelerated impressionism".

Lewis was even more strongly opposed to misplaced quests for the dynamic. Later, in Time and Western Man (1927), he was to disown even Joyce and Pound along with Alexander, Bergson, Whitehead and other exponents of philosophies of time, what he called the "deification of the flux". At this period, he sought a non-vital geometric art, rendering the form rather than the appearance of the "machine age". "Je hais **le mouvement que déplace les lignes**", he told Marinetti,[45] quoting from Baudelaire's poem, "La Beauté", and in this respect he was

closer to Hulme than to Pound. In later life he was to write in a letter which was never sent:

> Lastly, Vorticism. This name is an invention of Ezra Pound. When he writes me from his prison in Washington he addresses me as 'Old Vort'. What does this word mean? I do not know...[46]

Novertheless, in 1914 he issued such statement as "The Vorticist is at his maximum point of energy when stillest" and "The new vortex plunges to the heart of the present".[47] Indeed, one of his quarrels with the Futurists and the time philosophers was that they denied the present by their insistence on duration and becoming. Lewis, in contrast, treasured the present, refusing to sacrifice "the beautiful objective material world and (his) own individuality"[48] for Whitehead's flux.

For Lewis, the Vortex was Art's answer to life, a conservation of energy and perfection of form counterbalancing the flux and entropic tendencies of nature. For Pound, on the other hand, the Vortex was not only a centre but a transmitter of energy, so that in his view art and life were mor intimately connected. Both men, however, believed in the creative power of the artist to organize forms in such a way as to reach through the particular to the universal. They did not deny history or nature but abstracted from them to produce works of art in the timeless present:

> The Vorticist rejects the traditional mimetic and representational idea of art, for it is "harder to make than to copy"... he tries, on the contrary,to organise and express equivalences and mutual relations among the data of his analysis, thus creating a unity of controlled forces. He seeks "the universal existing in perfection, in freedom from space and time". Vorticism abolishes the categories of space and time in an simultaneity of representation.[49]

For Pound, this representation of a vortex or image, though in one sense free of time and space was nevertheless an organisation bound by balances of energy, what Olson was later to call a "high-energy construct":

> Vorticism is an intensive art. I mean by this, that one is concerned with the relative intensity, or relative

significance of different sorts of expression. One desires the most intense, for certain forms of expression are "more intense" than others. They are more dynamic.[50]

In searching for intense forms of expression Pound was much aided by his encounter with Fenollosa's work, particularly the essay which he edited, "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry". In the essay, Fenollosa insists that it is actions, processes, the relations between things which are important. These actions or relationships are the characteristic forms of nature and they are represented in language not by single elements such as nouns or verbs, which are no more than analytical or conceptual conveniences, but by the relationship between words, by the whole sentence. He shows how a Chinese ideogram may be built up from simplified pictorial representations of different terms, and how a Chinese sentence may be constructed by a series of such ideograms which retain the vividness and concreteness of the action they represent. "Chinese notation... is based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature."[51]

The recognition of the natural or pictorial as opposed to conventional symbolism in the Chinese written character leads Fenollosa back to the debates fo the Romantics and Transcendentalists over how far all language is derived from natural symbols, how far all language is an accretion of metaphor:

...the Chinese language with its peculiar materials has passed over from the seen to the unseen by exactly same process which all ancient races employed. This process is metaphor, the use of material things to suggest immaterial relations.
The whole delicate substance of speech is built upon the substrata of metaphor. Abstract terms, pressed by etymology, reveal their ancient roots still embodied in direct action. But the primitive metaphors do not spring from arbitrary subjective processes. They are possible only because they follow objective lines of relations in nature herself. Relations are more real and more important than the things they relate...
...Metaphor, the revealer of nature, is the very substance of poetry. The known interprets the obscure, the universe is alive with myth. The beauty and freedom of the observed world furnish a model, and life is pregnant with art.[52]

We notice in these passages the insistence on the natural world, the emphasis on its reality as the source of language and art. Fenollosa's theory of poetry allows a fusion of the Imagist position with its valuation of particulars and of externality with the abstract, formalistic aspects of Vorticism which looked through appearances for patterns and relations. For Fenollosa, as for Thoreau and Emerson, metaphors are not arbitrary and subjective since they spring from real relationships in nature; however, they demand for their articulation the services of the poet, who is the discoverer of metaphor and the inventor of language. From this view, art and life are totally interdependent and art acquires a moral force. Pound, particularly in his early period, has sometimes been thought of as an aesthete, a pursuer of beauty for its own sake. But he was at the same time always a moralist, and his art was always part of a total engagement with life, embracing politics, economics and ethics. In a note to the passage quoted above, Pound refers to his own article on Vorticism (1914) where he affirms both a belief in permanent metaphor and therefore in a world of objective relations, and asserts "All poetic language is the language of exploration". (We may note a further affinity with Kandinsky, "The spiritual life to which art belongs, and of which it is one of the mightiest agents, is a complex but definite movement above and beyond, which can be translated to simplicity. This movement is that of cognition").[53]

In other words, through poetry and metaphor, the sum of man's understanding of himself and his universe is increased. The new image is the "word beyond formulated language", it names something which is objectively real and thereby makes it available to the subjective consciousness of the tribe. Fenollosa argues that there is no such thing as a complete, closed sentence:

> in nature there is <u>no</u> completeness. ...no full sentence really completes a thought... The truth is that acts are successive, even continuous; one causes or passes

into another. And though we may string together ever so many clauses into a single compound sentence, motion leaks everywhere, like electricity from an exposed wire. All processes in nature are interrelated; and thus there could be no complete sentence (according to this definition) save one which it would take all time to pronounce.[54]

This "complete sentence" is affirmed differently by Whitman and Robert Duncan, by MacDiarmid and Charles Olson; even by Pound, for whom it is that which The Cantos seek to project - "that the body of light come forth/from the body of fire" (Canto XCI). He recognizes the impossibility of the poem which is a complete and simultaneous articulation of the universe in mimetic or representational terms; instead he seeks the essential vortices or images, "luminous details" which are so arranged, as in the ideogram, to re-enact in a different medium the process of natural relationships. Thus The Cantos is constructed out of images which are intended to cast or project a complete Image, as Louis Zukofsky has recognized:

Pound has not concerned himself merely with isolation of the image - a cross-breeding between single words which are absolute symbols for things and textures -

> The sand that night like a seal's back
> Glossy

- but with the poetic locus produced by the passage from one image to another. His Cantos are, in this sense, one extended image. One cannot pick from them a solitary poetic idea or a dozen varieties of it, as out of Eliot's Waste Land and say this is the substance out of which this single atmosphere emanates. The Cantos cannot be described as a sequence. A synopsis may no more be given of them than of a box, leaf, a chair, a picture: they are an image of his world, "an intellectual and emotional complex caught in an instant of time".[55]

What Zukofsky here calls "poetic locus" might equally well be termed the "field" of the poem, extending in all directions, without boundaries, open, yet only incomplete in so far as areas of it are not articulated. This field is the area of the "Imagist" long poem, a poem plotted or mapped as interrelating vortices of energy. Since it is assumed that the energy of the subject, of nature, life

and art is common and that all these realms are equally real, the vortices or luminous details may be drawn from history, personal experience, works of art or literature, or from natural phenomena. All are in relation and diverse particulars may conform to similar formal patterns; "their planes may overlap" resulting in new metaphor.

In The Cantos a number of themes or patterns recur in different particular instances, instances which Hugh Kenner calls homeomorphic; for instance, the political philosophy of Confucius and of John Adams. At the same time specific events, facts, moments from personal experience, myth or art appear again and again, sometimes as mere passing allusions. These allusions are used as a sort of ideogrammatic shorthand at particular points of the poem to remind us how the whole is implicated in every part and to stress particular correspondances between different elements.

Clearly this is not the place for an explication of even one of the Cantos; such is their interdependence and range that only a mammoth work like Hugh Kenner's The Pound Era can attempt to match them. We may feel that Pound's attempt at the total poem, the grand image cast by the fragmentary notation of The Cantos is not as successful in execution as it is impressive in its ambition. This may be because elements of the poem are too allusive, too dependent either on private experience or upon ranges of knowledge not widely available. As a result, even the reader who has taken pains to inform himself of the background to the poem will find himself, in Fenollosa's words, "juggling mental counters" rather than "watching things work out their own fate".[56] Nevertheless, Pound's theory of poetry as presented in his critical writings and partially illustrated in The Cantos does provide a methodology for the long "imagist" poem, the poem where the organizing structure is worked out in the language itself.

Thus we have moved from the minimal poems which fix fleeting personal experiences or impressions to the long open poem where such impressions, "the smell of mint under the tent flap"[57] play their part as the particulars they are and as instances of patterns which recur in nature and history. We have moved from the symbolism where the poem only treats its subject indirectly, through impressionism and early imagism with its concentration on the particular, to a poetry where the symbol and the natural object become one, where the universal and the eternal is discovered in the immediacy of the particular. The scepticism of Hulme which saw language and words as distortions of reality and placed value on metaphor only as it stimulated a temporary fresh perception is reversed to become the optimistic view of poetry as an ever-increasing discovery and articulation of natural forms, as a processin itself unending and therefore abreast with and an influence on contemporary reality.

In this poetic the alternatives of materialism and idealism, of form and of substance are transcended. Form is as real as substance, and lies in the dynamic and real relationships between things, be they words, notions or natural objects all of which are equally real. Thus the clear hard definitions of Imagism and Vorticism need not be abandoned in the attempt to render process as Lewis seems to have feared. Nor are the definitions unreal or false, as Bergson and Hulme intimated; they exist in their own right and interact with other entities in the totality. Poetry becomes the quest for knowledge, knowledge which is at once the discovery of the world and the organization of that discovery into significant patterns and forms. The material available for the poet widens to include the wealth of nature and culture. It is his task to recreate language so that this material may be organized and articulated as fully as possible for his own time.

The possibilities of Pound's theory were more extensively taken up by later generations, the Objectivists, Zukofsky, Olson, Duncan, the post-moderns, writers of our own time. David Jones and Hugh McDiarmid, Pound's contemporaries, struggled with the same problems and came to some of the same answers. In the next chapter, I hope to show how David Jones in The Anathemata wrote a "Vorticist" long poem, though his inspiration was primarily a religious rather than a humanist one.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1 Publisher of The Poetry Review, then Poetry and Drama. He also ran the Poetry Bookshop.

2 "And he felt the errors of contemporary style to the point of rolling (physically, and if you look at it as mere superficial snob, ridiculously) on the floor of his temporary quarters in Giessen when my third volume displayed me trapped, flypapered, gummed and strapped down in a jejune provincial effort to learn, mehercule, the stilted language that then passed for 'good English' in the arthritic milieu that held control of the respected British critical circles..." Ezra Pound in "Ford Madox (Hueffer) Ford; Obit" reprinted in Selected Prose 1909 - 1965 (London, 1973) p.431.

3 See My Friends When Young, The Memoirs of Brigit Patmore edited by Derek Patmore (London, 1968); incidentally, both Brigit Patmore and A.B.C. s in general were blessed in BLAST.

4 Introduction to Imagist Anthology 1930 (London 1930) p.ix.

5 Des Imagistes 1914 was followed by two volumes edited by Amy Lowell Some Imagist Poets 1915 and 1916 and finally by the 1930 Imagist Anthology. The extra 'e' which was largely an elaboration by Pound intended to convey an impression of French origins and sophistication became a matter for contest when he split with Amy Lowell but was afterwards dropped by all parties. I shall not use the "e" except where direct quotation or specific historical context make it unavoidable.

6 Hulme, Further Speculations, p.72.

7 In "Vorticism", Fortnightly Review, Vol.96 (1914).

8 The Road From Paris (Cambridge, 1974) p.58.

9 "Prefatory Note" to "The Complete Poetical Works of T.E. Hulme" reprinted in Collected Shorter Poems (London, 1952) p.269.

10 F.S. Flint, "The History of Imagism" in The Egoist, May 1st (1915) p.71.

11 Mirrors of Illusion (London, 1909) p.10.

12 Imagist Anthology 1930, p.xiv. Stanley Coffman in Imagism: A Chapter for the History of Modern Poetry (Oklahoma, 1951) p.114, claims that Ford gleaned this last notion from Stephen Crane.

13 "Vorticism", Fortnightly Review, Vol.96, 1914, reprinted in Gaudier-Brzeska (London, 1960) p.89.

14 Reprinted in Imagist Poetry, edited by Peter Jones (Harmondsworth, 1972) p.136.

15 All these poems may be found in Imagist Poetry.

16 Poetry (Chicago) 1913 reprinted in Literary Essays of Ezra Pound (London, 1954) p.5.

17 Literary Essays, p.12.

18 Literary Essays, p.9.

19 The New Age, Vol.13 (Oct.16, 1913).

20 F.S. Flint "History of Imagism" in The Egoist, May 1st, 1915.

21 See Christopher Middleton, "Documents on Imagism from the Papers of F.S. Flint", The Review (April, 1965)

22 Pound's own "Δῶρια", published in Des Imagistes seems a fair example.

23 Imagist Poetry, p.62.

24 Coffman, p.149-150.

25 The New Age, Vol.9 (24 August, 1911).

26 See later chapters, and also Robert Duncan, Introduction to Bending the Bow (London, 1971).

27 Collected Shorter Poems, p.119.

28 See above, p.5.

29 See Coffman, above, p.12.

30 Compare Kandinsky in Concerning the Spiritual in Art (New York, 1947) p.23-24: "The sequence is: emotion (in the artist) - the sensed - emotion (in the observer)". Pound refers to Kandinsky (1912 ed.) in the essay on Vorticism.

31 Reprinted in Imagist Poetry, p.136.

32 Charles Olson in "Projective Verse" (1950).

33 Quoted by William C. Wees in Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde Manchester, 1972) p.81 and p.3.

34 As in "Patria Mia", The New Age, Vol.13, (May 1st, 1913).

35 Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment (London, 1950) p.125.

36 John Berger, Selected Essays and Articles (Harmondsworth, 1972) p.136.

37 Quoted by Wees, p.187.

38 "A Few Don'ts", Literary Essays, p.4.

39 Guy Habasque, Cubism (Lausanne, 1959) pp.28, 56.

40 Donald Davie, Pound (Glasgow, 1975) p.62, Ch.4 passim.

41 First published 1915, reprinted in Gaudier-Brzeska, p.120.

42 Gaudier-Brzeska, p.120.

43 Gaudier-Brzeska, p.92.

44 The "ideal form" is close to A.N. Whitehead's notion of "eternal objects" which are unreal, only achieving actuality in the concrescence of an "actual event" or "entity".. See Process and Reality (London, 1929) passim and discussion in later chapters.

45 Wees, p.113.

46 The Letters of Wyndham Lewis (edited by W.K. Rose London, 1963) p.567.

47 Wees, p.161.

48 Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man (London, 1937) p.175.

49 Annamaria Sala, "Vorticism and Futurism" in Agenda, Vol.7, nos.3-4 (1969) p.158.

50 Gaudier-Brzeska, p.90.

51 Ernest Fenollosa, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry (edited by Ezra Pound (1936; reprinted San Francisco, 1969) p.8.

52 Fenollosa, p.22-23.

53 Kandinsky, p.26.

54 Fenollosa, p.11.

55 Louis Zukofsky, Prepositions; the Collected Critical Essays (London, 1967).

56 Fenollosa, p.9.

57 Canto 74, The Cantos, (London, 1958) p.454.

CHAPTER THREE

DAVID JONES AND THE ANATHEMATA

In the first two chapters of this thesis I have attempted to provide some of the background ideas and theories which have influenced poets writing in this century. I have sought to establish the importance of the "image" as a key concept in modernist poetics and to bring out some of the many problems, difficulties and confusions which surround this central and highly fertile notion. In particular, I have tried to show how imagist theories might bear on possibilities for the long poem.

Perhaps the single most significant feature of the "image" is that it can provide an internal structure principle for the poem, a principle whereby form is not imposed but arises from the generation of content. In the long poem, as in the lyric, the chief organising force will come, not from a preconceived narrative or plot, nor from any predetermined verse form, nor even from the arbitrary decision of the author, but from the coherent and dynamic development of the imagery, or, in other words, from metaphoric process. The difference between image and metaphor has become insignificant since both terms have been used so generally that they have overlapped almost totally. However, the previous chapters have shown how much the theory of imagism is based upon the functioning of metaphor, not as decoration, but as the constituting feature of the poetic organism. For Hulme, the vividness of the image could only be conveyed by the invention of new metaphor. Indeed, as we saw in the first chapter, he accepted the Romantic belief that all language was originally metaphorical though through usage words lose their imagistic or sensible content and become "counter-words", merely symbolic. According to this view, the process of generating metaphor, the process of poetry creates the history and continuation of language.

We saw too, how important metaphor was for the Imagists, how many of their poems were based on a single resonating metaphor. Even where an Imagist poem contains only one element, and such poems are rare,[1] the working of metaphor is implicit

since the words of the poem are themselves the expression or vehicle of the idea, intuition or emotion which the poet seeks to convey. Words are always other than their referents, yet the decision to use words significantly implies a belief in some sort of correspondence between the word, or sign, and what it refers to or signifies. Any new word or arrangement of words which refers beyond itself must be considered as the birth of a metaphor, since through the matching of the sign to what is signified new meaning is created. Nonsense words cannot be metaphor, not until a reference has been found for them, when they are no longer nonsensical. Metaphor must have meaning, and meaning itself entails communicability, openness and continuation.

There might seem to be some distance between modernist poetic doctrines, Ezra Pound or even the Imagists and the work of David Jones, the Anglo-Welsh, Roman Catholic writer and artist. Yet Jones shares with the great modern innovators the interest in the medium itself as the matter of the work, in actual words as the content of the poem. Commenting on a broadcast talk by Henry Reed, he wrote:

> If the formal problems attaching to the making of poetry in 1923 were such that could not be resolved by resort to 'external discipline' the same would seem to apply in 1953. Unless some radical change has indeed occurred, not in our own inclinations or wishes, but in the actual civilisational situation. But that situation, insofar as it conditions the making of works, seems not to have changed except in the sense of a considerable intensification and extension of its earlier characteristics. So that it would appear that the problems of the poet remain essentially the same, except that those problems are even more intensified and more complex.[2]

David Jones realised that he must find his discipline inside his work and recognised that this must come from language, from the medium itself. This allowed him to become an innovator in form, for in his work the image does become the internal structuring principle, so much so that we may indeed argue that The Anathemata is a Vorticist poem.

Acknowledgement of Jones's achievement and importance in the modern movement came from no less a figure than T.S. Eliot:

The work of David Jones has some affinity with that of James Joyce (both men seem to me to have the Celtic ear for the music of words) and with the later work of Ezra Pound and with my own. I stress the affinity, as any possible influence seems to me to be slight and of no importance. David Jones is a representative of the same literary generation as Joyce, Pound and myself, if four men born between 1882 and 1895 can be regarded as of the same literary generation. David Jones is the youngest and the tardiest to publish.[3]

In his study of the poet's writings, Jeremy Hooker also testifies to Jones's modernity:

He is, it seems to me, unquestionably a writer who is post-Joyce and post-Eliot in his approach to language and form, but their influence, occasionally detectable in the use of language or material, is largely upon the sense of possibility that be brings to the construction of form. In this respect he imitates neither, but has learnt from both. He is, I believe, the only major poet for whom the revolutionary modernism of Eliot and Joyce has been a stimulant to the creation of an individual imaginative world, which extends some of the possibilities, in the realms of language and form, which their work opened up.[4]

David Jones drew many of his own beliefs and theories about art and writing from his somewhat singular experience as a Catholic convert and a painter. It may well have been the practice of painting, engraving and lettering which made him so aware of craftsmanship, of the actuality of his medium and the objective reality of the art product. At the same time, any philosophical depth in his critical writings derives from the most part from the teaching of Thomas Aquinas whose system was accepted in 1879 as the official philosophy of the Catholic Church. However, Jones' understanding of Aquinas was mediated by certain works by Catholic artists and philosophers. Most important of these were probably Art and a Changing Civilisation (London, 1934) by Eric Gill, for a long time the poet's mentor and friend; Art and Scholasticism (London, 1930) by Jacques Maritain, which is the basis for most of Gill's aesthetics and which, in its first translation by Fr. John O'Connor, was published by Gill's Ditchling Press in 1923; and Barbara Celarent (London, 1949), an introduction to Thomist dialectic by Fr. Thomas Gilby, O.P. Other important influences on the poet were Mysterium Fidei by Maurice de la Taille [5] along

with The Mass and the Redemption (London, 1926) by Fr. Martin D'Arcy which summarises and expounds de la Taillie's thesis in English. Like most of his generation, Jones had read The Decline of the West (London, 1926) by Oswald Spengler, but although he found some of the ideas and terminology useful, it is unlikely that he was in general sympathy with the work.[6] In citing these books as sources for David Jones I am considering his broad philosophical position rather than the specific content of his writing. Therefore I have not attempted here to enumerate the many works on Roman, British and Welsh history, on ancient literatures, mythology, archaeology and anthropology which the poet used.

In the first part of this chapter I wish to consider Jones's theory of the nature of art and poetry, to show how these are in some respects derived from the writers cited above but are modified by his own artistic experience. This discussion should bring out the many similarities between David Jones's Thomist-influenced poetic theory and the ideas debated by Hulme, Pound and the Imagists. Let us turn therefore to the central issues of image and metaphor which have been touched on above. We encounter an immediate difficulty with terminology for Jones speaks of "analogies" and "valid signs" where we might expect to find "images" and "metaphors", and though there are similarities between the notions, the terms by no means completely correspond. Perhaps the first concept we should consider is that of "analogy" which is crucial to Thomist dialectic; on it are based the system's claims to rationality, while at the same time it allows for an almost devious flexibility and the capacity to deal with the contingent and temporal world. The function of analogy in the Thomist system is very similar to the function of metaphor or a cohesive and relating force:

> For him (St. Thomas) analogy is not just a method of arguing by examples, but is a response to the inter-relatedness of heterogeneous things and an exposition of their affinities.[7]

Analogy includes the figures of metaphor and simile but is more often thought of as a method of argument, a reasoning from parallel cases than a device of poetry. However, no

analogy is necessarily or a priori valid and the acceptance of an argument by analogy implies a belief in the possibility of communication and common experience, of pattern and order. This belief is already assumed by Aquinas for he bases his system on man's rationality and the harmony of the created world. Gilby asserts in his discussion of dialectic:

> We must take for granted that language is expressive of thought, that thinking itself is an admirable and profitable form of activity, that the purpose of thinking is to discover real meaning, that different minds can share in the same meaning, and that this meaning is not just a label we write out, but part of the stuff of reality.[8]

Faith in the human intellect and the intelligibility of the world are central to orthodox Catholic thinking, and it was this belief in rationality which led Maritain to reject Bergson:

> Thanks to analogical intellection, that natural marvel of strength and lightness, thrown from one limit to the other, which makes us capable of knowing the infinite, the concept, divinely elaborated in the dogmatic formula, contains without limiting it and brings down to us, as in a mirror and an enigma, but also in all truth, the very mystery of the Deity, which states itself eternally in the uncreated Word, and tells of itself in time and in human language by the Word made flesh. Therefore it is likely that there has been some fundamental misunderstanding at the root of Bergson's combat against carnal reason. He made the concept the normal vehicle of rationalism and there is the mortal error. He confused the affirmation of the ontological value of the intelligence and its assertions with the impotence of a barren intellect anxious to bring everything down to its own level.[9]

Analogical argument is thus to be considered as a method of acquiring knowledge, of proceeding from the known to the unknown. Clearly this has much in common with the metaphoric processes which function in poetry. We might compare Pound's example

> The image is the word beyond formulated language.
> I once saw a small child go to an electric light switch and say 'Mamma, can I open the light?! She was using the age-old language of exploration, the language of art.[10]

The most important feature of poetic metaphor is normally held to be its fusion of different elements, of tenor and vehicle, to create a new meaning, enriching one

or both of the original notions. Yet, as many writers have noticed, a metaphor only remains valid and effective so long as the consciousness of the difference between the terms is maintained; if the synthesis is complete and fully accepted, the metaphor dies into cliche or the mere convention of common language, e.g. "iron will". On the other hand, analogical argument would appear to depend on the maintenance of the distinction between one side of the comparison and the other, since it can only proceed by moving between them. At the same time, the perception of an analogy is a unifying and ordering activity, bringing different elements to experience into coherence. If the analogy is valid, therefore, there must be a real link, a real likeness or sameness in the two notions compared. This real relation may be considered as equivalent to metaphor in poetry, to the discovery of "homologues" or "rimes".[11] In Thomist philosophy, though the subject of such controversy, this real relation is predicated on the transcendent unity of God. It is this reality of analogical relations which we must now investigate, for it has considerable bearing on the theory and practice of David Jones in poetry.

God is the first cause of all the created world and all things have their source in him, and all things are good. Evil is not in itself real or substantial, it is a privation, a lack of good. The different perfections or virtues we discover in the world we predicate of God, as, for instance, intelligence, wisdom, beauty, mercy. However, we can only predicate of God "pure perfections", that is, those which are not dependent on finitude or materiality, and we can only predicate these pure perfections analogically. This is because our notions of beauty and wisdom derive from our experience which is limited. We know that these qualities proceed from God and therefore God must be of at least the degree of virtue that we have discovered in the world. God's wisdom is therefore, in some respects, like human wisdom, in other respects unlike and unknowable, at least to the natural human intellect. Moreover, though we discover different virtues in the world and predicate these of God,

these attributes are not distinct in the Deity but ontologically identical.

The divine nature, however, can be known by us only piecemeal, as it were. Our ideas are derived from creatures, and we conceive god under different aspects according to his different representations in finite things. We naturally introduce distinctions where there are no real distinctions. The infinity of the divine perfection which cannot be comprehended by our minds, forces us to do this. For the infinite richness of the divine nature cannot be apprehended by us in one concept. As our concepts are based on experience of creatures, the terms predicated of God are not for us synonymous; they do not all mean the same thing if we are talking about the meaning which they have for our minds and which we can state. Ontologically, however, they all refer to the same being, in which there is no real distinction of attributes.[12]

In other words, as we saw in the extract from Maritain quoted above, the eternal and single Logos, when it becomes flesh, as incarnated in creation, splinters into the Many, into different "goods" or perfections which are analogous and really related by reason of their origin in the One. Maritain further expands this real relation in Art and Scholasticism, in the chapter on Art and Beauty:

... the beautiful belongs to the order of transcendentals - that is to say, of concepts which surpass all limits of kind or category and will not suffer themselves to be confined in any class, because they absorb everything and are to be found everywhere. Like the one, the true and the good, it is being itself considered from a certain aspect, it is a property of being: it is not an accident superadded to being, it adds to being merely a relation of reason, it is being considered as delighting, by the mere intuition of it, an intellectual nature. So everything is beautiful and everything is good, at least in a certain relation. And as being is everywhere present and everywhere various, the beautiful likewise is scattered everywhere and everywhere various. Like being and the other transcendentals, it is essentially analogous, that is to say it is predicated for diverse reasons, sub diverse ratione, of the divers subjects of which it is predicated: each kind of being is in its own way, is good in its own way, is beautiful in its own way.

Analogous concepts are properly predicatable only of God, in whom the perfection they describe exists in a "formal-eminent" manner, in a pure and infinite state. God is their "sovereign-analogue" and they are to be found in things only as a scattered and prismatized reflection of the face of God.[13]

Maritain goes on to note:

> Once we touch a transcendental, we touch being itself, a likeness of God, an absolute, all that ennobles and makes the joy of life: we enter the realm of the spirit. It is remarkable that the only real means of communication between human creatures is through being or some one of the properties of being. This is their only means of escape from the individuality in which they are enclosed by matter. If they remain on the plane of their sensible needs, they tell their stories to one another in vain; they cannot understand each other ... Men are only really united by the spirit: light alone gathers them together, intellectualia et rationalia omnia congregens, et indestrictibilia facens.[14]

We should notice that the power of analogy so derived from divine perfection and unity allows us to consider the different forms of human activity as analogous and directed to the same eventual end. Science, which is described as a disinterested virtue of the speculative intelligence, has wisdom as its object; Prudence, or Morality, is a practical virtue directed to the good; while Art, also a practical virtue, is directed towards its product, in the case of the fine arts, towards the production of beauty. However, beauty, good and wisdom are aspects of being, identical and perfect in the Deity, so that all human activity is directed towards God.

Having recognised the importance of analogy in the Thomist system we perceive that it functions dialectically to articulate order and unity in the world and to increase knowledge. This quest for ever wider knowledge, the desire to proceed from the known to the unknown is strongly akin to the generation of metaphor in poetry.

The notion of the "valid sign", so important to Jones's conception of art, very much relies on the acceptance of the theory of analogy outlined above. David Jones demanded that the work of art be a product, an object existing in its own right:

> For one of the more rewarding notions implicit in the post-Impressionist idea was that a work is a 'thing' and not (necessarily) the impression of some other thing.[15]

We may note that Jones mentions Hulme in connection with objectivism in art: "We did not sufficiently take into account the tide of subjectivism against which such objective views were struggling. For example, the rewarding

speculations of T.E. Hulme can hardly be said to have made his book a best-seller".[16] In other respects, Jones had little affinity with Hulme.

Yet though the work of art was a product, existing in its own right and though not necessarily the "impression" of something else, nevertheless Jones demanded that it must be a "sign", or what others might term a symbol. It should refer beyond itself, be plurisignative, be possessed of analogic or metaphoric power. It is the duty of the artist, Jones claimed, to lift up "valid signs" [17] by arranging and shaping elements of the medium in which he works. Moreover, the particular problem of the artist is to judge what, in his own time, constitutes a valid sign:

> In practice one of his main problems, one of the matters on which his judgement is exercised ('The virtue of art is to judge') concerns the validity and availability of his images. It is precisely this validity and availability that constitutes his greatest problem in the present culture-situation.[18]

However, before considering the problems of judgement and validity, let us investigate the sources of this concept of "sign". Again, it has its roots in neo-Thomist dialectic and sacramental theology. According to Gilby (Barbara Celarent, Ch.VI) every mental concept or image is a sign or relation pointing towards the naturally existing thing of which it is the concept or image. But signs do not include only mental images, they cover anything which is a means of knowing, or an indication of another thing. So an object may exist in its natural being (esse naturali) and as a sign, but only in so far as it is an idea pointing towards another natural being. "An idea consists in beckoning or pointing; in other words it is a sign; not a facsimile, but a means of knowing another".[19] For example, a road sign depicting a cross-roads has a natural being, is an object in its own right, but also points towards or suggests another entity, i.e., the actual cross-roads. A mental image, on the other hand, would seem to be a sign only. It is through the objectification of such images that art is produced and from which it derives its dual nature as esse naturali and esse intentionali.

Gilby further distinguishes between natural and artificial signs, natural signs being those which do not depend on convention but on some real likeness, while artificial signs are arbitrarily chosen and their signification dependent on agreement and custom. Language, Gilby argues, is composed for the most part of artificial signs, though onomatopoeic words may shade into natural signs, while the power of emotion, association or poetic skill may confer on other words the force of natural signs. The question is then raised as to whether ideas, i.e., mental images or concepts, are natural signs. As a Thomist, a realist and a rationalist, Gilby asserts roundly that they are:

> A realist and vital philosophy, however, if it is a rationalism as well must claim more, it cannot be content with a 'let's pretend or with knowledge that has no roots in the physical world. Such a doctrine, doubtful of its contact with what is real, dries thought into artificial specimens, and makes the communication of ideas just the exchange of convenient counters. By affirming that ideas are natural signs we break out of ourselves and find company.[20]

This passage could easily be an attack on the position of Bergson and Hulme, for whom, as we have seen, concepts were merely "convenient counters" and were distortions of the reality of duration. For Hulme this led to a position of near-scepticism and solipsism which was inadequately redeemed by his theory of intuition and imagism. Pound and Lewis, leaders of the Vorticists, agreed in asserting the reality of the idea and the concept as well as the reality of "the beautiful objective material world".[21] Moreover, they insisted on congruence between the ideas of the mind and the external world, a congruence which is realised through the discovery and articulation of form and relations.

Gilby goes even further (in his next chapter) when he discusses image and meaning. An "image" is the sensible impression effected by a sign while meaning is the abstract idea which it indicates. The "image" may be vivid but it is peculiar to the individual and very temporary; the abstract idea is less immediate but is lasting, consistent and communicalble. "The adoption of the distinction between

image and idea is indispensable for scientific thinking. For the imagination is always present, and however lively, fresh and clean, its images are thick and solidified compared with the subtle and fluent reality of meaning".[22] Again, this passage might be a direct confrontation of Hulme, for whom it was abstract ideas which were thick and solidified, while images and intuition were in touch with the fluent reality of duration. However, we saw in the first chapter that when images were crystallised or objectified as art, they too become fixed and in fact eventually lost their immediacy and were downgraded to concepts.

Though the Thomist position may seem to contradict ordinary experience where Bergson(ism) was most convincing, in the end perhaps it will prove more satisfactory. While allowing a place for intuition in aesthetic theory, it permits us to extend the range of poetry beyong the brief expressions of fleeting individual experiences envisioned by Hulme. Works of art, as sensible and intelligible signs, do not only delight through their appeal to the senses, they may also increase understanding by their burden of meaning. The discussion of St. Thomas's definition of beauty, "id quod visum placet", in Maritain's Art and Scholasticism may be cited in support of this suggestion. Maritain argues that while Art is a virtue of the practical intellect, having a product as its end, the fine arts in particular are directed to the beautiful and thus partake of the transcendental:

> Art in general tends to make a work. But certain arts tend to make a work of beauty and thereby differ essentially from all the rest. The work which involves the labour of all the other arts is itself ordered to the service of man and is therefore a mere means: it is completely enclosed in a definite material genus or kind. The work which involves the labour of the Fine Arts is ordered to beauty: insofar as it is beautiful it is an end, an absolute, self-sufficient; and if, as work to be done, it is material and enclosed in a kind, as beautiful it belongs to the realm of the spirit and dives deep into the transcendence and infinity of being.[23]

Since every work of fine art, therefore, is so by virtue of its beauty, it will be apprehended as any thing of beauty is apprehended; by delighting the senses.

It is important, however, to observe that in the beauty which has been turned connatural to man and is peculiar to human art this brilliance of form,[24] however purely intelligible it may be in itself, is apprehended in the sensible and by the sensible, and not separately from it. The intuition of artistic beauty so stands at the opposite pole from the abstraction of scientific truth. For in the former case it is precisely through the apprehension of sense that the light of being penetrates to the mind.

The mind then spares the least effort of abstraction, rejoices without labour and without discussion. It is excused its customary task, it has not to extricate something intelligible from the matter in which it is buried and then step by step go through its various attributes; like the stag at the spring of running water, it has nothing to do but drink and it drinks the clarity of being. Firmly fixed in the intuition of sense, it is irradiated by an intelligible light granted it of a sudden in the very sensible in which it glitters; and it apprehends this light not sub ratione veri, but rather sub ratione delectabilis, by the happy exercise it procures for it and the succeeding joy in appetite, which leaps out to every good of the soul as its own peculiar object. Only afterwards will it more or less successfully analyse in reflection the causes of such joy.[25]

Thus it seems that the primary or initial impact of a work of art is as a sensible sign, what Gilby calls an "image" and is forced to disprize for its subjectivity - "But images and experiences are personal and cannot properly enter into psychological commerce; they can be suggested but not explained; in a sense they always remain solitary".[26] The image is vivid but unrepeatable; even for the same person, each reading of a poem will be a new experience, an event in time. But this is not the only way in which poetry operates. Though Maritain declares it to be at the opposite pole from the abstraction of scientific truth, nevertheless truth and beauty as transcedentals are identical and the pursuits of poetry and science are analogous:

In short, if, because of its matter, which is contingent, it (Art) accords with Prudence more than with Science, according to its formal reason and in so far as it is a virtue it accords with science and the habits of the speculative intellect more than with Prudence: ars magis convenit cum habitibus speculationis in ratione virtutis, quam cum prudentia.[27]

It is when we come to reflect on the experience of a poem, to consider and discuss it critically, that we apprehend the poetic sign as intelligible or meaningful. This meaning is reinforced and, depending on the strength of the sign, enriched by each interpretation, whether by the same or different readers. The meaning is what can be shared and communicated, the significance which can be attributed objectively to the work. It is, as it were, the plot or myth of the poem perpetually reenacted on every individual occasion of interpretation. The meaning of the poetic sign, however, differs from that of the scientific sign in that it includes and unifies instead of defining and excluding. David Jones, seeking for valid poetic signs, demanded this richness which restores and unifies human experience:

> If the poet writes 'wood' what are the chances that the Wood of the Cross will be evoked? Should the answer be 'None' then it would seem that an impoverishment of some sort would have to be admitted. It would mean that that particular word could no longer be used with confidence to implement, to call up or set in motion a whole world of content belonging in a special sense to the mythus of a particular culture and of concepts and realities belonging to mankind as such. This would be true irrespective of our beliefs and disbeliefs. It would remain true even if we were of the opinion that it was high time that the word 'wood' should be dissociated from the mythus and concepts indicated. The arts abhor any loppings off of meanings or emptyings out, any lessening of the totality of connotation, any loss of recession and thickness through.[28]

We come now to consider what is a sign in poetry, how it works and what is its relation to what it indicates. In our examination of Imagism we discovered that the creation and communication of a poem could be broken down into numerous stages: external stimulus on the poet; poet's intuition; poem or poetic image; reader's intuition and interpretation of the poem. (Whereas Hulme and some of the early Imagists tended to over-emphasise the artist's special experience and paid inadequate attention to the objective aspects of creation, artistic skill and the problem of the measure of identity between the artist and the eventual experience of the reader, that is, of real

communication, David Jones, on the other hand, very much plays down the individual personality of the artist, stressing his role as a craftsman, a maker, a means for producing objective works which will perpetuate a common culture). This is not to say that the poet's own background and antecedents are unimportant; on the contrary:

> Part of my task has been to allow myself to be directed by motifs gathered together from such sources as have by accident been available to me and to make a work out of those mixed data.
>
> This, you will say, is in a sense, the task of any artist in any material, seeing that whatever he needs must necessarily show forth what is his by this or that inheritance ...
>
> ... What is this writing about? I answer that it is about one's own 'thing', which res is unavoidably part and parcel of the Western Christian res, as inherited by a person whose perceptions are totally conditioned and limited by and dependent upon his being indigenous to this island. In this it is necessarily insular; within which insularity there are the further conditionings contingent upon his being a Londoner, of Welsh and English parentage, of Protestant upbringing, of Catholic subscription.[29]

In this passage the poet's concern is not to present his biography or personality; rather he is locating the centre of his work, so that we may be able to place ourselves in relation to it.

In the deliberate denial of the personality of the man, the insistence on craft, Jones is again an orthodox Thomist. Art is a virtue of the practical intellect, and as a virtue inclined to the good and therefore infallibly correct. Defects are introduced into art through the fallibility of the artist in material execution:

> Although extrinsically and on the material side involving contingency and fallibility, in itself, that is to say, on the formal side and so far as regulation by the mind is concerned, art does not fluctuate like opinion, but is firmly fixed in certitude.[30]

It is necessary for the workman to be possessed of the virtue of art in order for the work to be good, "for the manner of the action follows the disposition of the agent, and, as a man is, so are his works".[31] So, though Art works through the artist, the form and the success of a

work will be dependent on the particular character and circumstances of that artist.

We might compare David Jones's rejection of subjectivity to the famous "impersonality theory" advanced by T.S. Eliot.

> ... for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality.[32]

In his theory of impersonality, Eliot, like Jones, sees the poet as the transmitter and preserver of tradition:

> And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.[33]

This notion is very close to Jones's assertion that it is the task of the poor to be able to judge what is a "valid sign" for his own particular time. However, when Eliot speaks of the tradition, we tend to feel he is emphasising the literary tradition. There is not the sense of a wholly shared background, as there is in Jones. Moreover, while Eliot does recognise the importance of craft in writing, he still clings to the notion of the poet as possessed of a special sort of sensibility. Describing poetic creation, he says:

> It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all.[34]

Jones's theory of art does not require the erection of this barrier between the practical and active person and the artist. He stresses rather the importance of the objective nature of the particular art in which the artist is engaged, and his skill in the means and modes of that art:

> The artist, no matter of what sort or what his medium, must be moved by the nature of whatever art he practices. Otherwise he cannot move us by the images he wishes to call up, discover, show forth and represent under the appearance of this or that material, through the workings of this or that art.
>
> The artist is not, necessarily, a person vastly more aware than his friends and relations of the beauty of nature, but rather he is the person most aware of the nature of an art. The inception or renewal or deepening of some artistic vitality normally comes to the artist via some other artist or existing art form, not via nature. This is observable in the art-forms of whole cultures and among individual artists. I don't regard myself as an exception to this rule - on the contrary, an example of it.[35]

Thus, Jones places much less emphasis on the initial stimulus or intuition experienced by the artist and much more on the manner in which the artist seeks to represent his idea in his own particular medium. Where T.E. Hulme expected the artist to penetrate the flux of duration to extricate and crystallize in art a fresh image, the sort of image those who are not artists cannot achieve for themselves, Jones rather sees the poet as a "rememberer", a preserver and perpetuator of images of the common culture:

> That is to say our making is dependent on a remembering of some sort. It may be only the remembering of a personal emotion of last Monday-week in the tranquility of next Friday fortnight. But a 'deed' has entered history, in this case our private history and is therefore valid as matter for our poetry. For poetry is the song of deeds. But it seems to me that a deed that entered history a millenium, or fifty milleniums, ago and which has been assimilated into the mythos of whole groups of men, perhaps of the whole group called mankind, is, other things being equal, of even more validity for our poetry.[36]

But this claim, which is in essence a demand for epic poetry, has its difficulties as Jones readily acknowledges. He quite understood the feeling that led Hulme and others to assert that the time for large-scale public poetry was past, that the only work which was possible and relevant was that which mirrored the fleeting and invididual experience. He stated that no sign could be "valid" unless it belonged to the "here and now". The task of the artist is to select and order his material in order to create a sign which is meaningful at his own moment in time, but

which simultaneously can indicate the "deeds" of the past which it is his duty to recall, by re-presenting them. Again, the artist's role is to discover continuity in his own experience and that of his people. The whole effort of The Anathemata is directed towards so arranging elements from remote history and forgotten myths with images familiar to contemporary experience in such a way that the past may be reviewed and our understanding of the present enriched by it. We may come to The Anathemata with little feeling for the potential of the word "tree" as a sign, but when we have read the poem we have come to accept it as indeed "axile", repeated in the figures of Ygdrasil, mast, keel, Roman battering ram, maypole and all the symbols men have invented for the Cross of Christ.

Jones's sense of the richness of certain words and their power to evoke past events and even to project the future is very much reinforced by traditional notions of typology and particularly by the idea of figures and prefiguration which is central to Maurice de la Taille's thesis, Mysterium Fidei. For instance, all Hebrew sacrifices and apparent acceptance of the same by God were only effective as they prefigured Christ's sacrifice, and similarly, fifteen centuries of Passover feasts have served to foretell the Last Supper, "Behold here, the Lamb of God, the Lamb foretold by fifteen centures of Paschal feasts".[37] In de la Taille's thesis the Last Supper and the Crucifixion are identified as two aspects of the same event, the first symbolic, the second real.

> The whole Passion is sacrifice, because the whole Passion is bloody immolation offered by the Priest; and the Supper is the same sacrifice, one and indivisible, because it is the gesture of the Priest, offering, in an unbloody rite, the same bloody immolation.[38]

The importance of the identity of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion will become apparent when we come to the study of the text of the poem.

We should recognise that for Jones, as a poet, the signs of which he speaks are the actual words and arrangements of language in the poem, not any idea or image which the words

may represent. He never affects to believe that the image or even the object can somehow be rendered, unaltered, in the work of art, or that there is some necessary connection between word and thing. The effectiveness of the image depends more on the skill of the artist to choose his words than his peculiar susceptibility to startling mental images. Such a view removes much of the mystique from the notion of the "image". The moment when something inward and subjective darts into something outward and objective, the mental synthesis of Spinoza, cooking and the sound of the typewriter, none of these can become poetry until the right words are found to become their sign. This, to be fair, is the import of Pound's account of the composition of "In a Station of the Metro"; he describes the various stages whereby he discarded the wrong words for the poem, until at last he arrived at the correct formulation, the "valid sign".

In these views, Jones is asserting his own beliefs since the Thomist writers he followed did give some space to explaining the special faculty of the artist to intuit reality.

> The human artist or poet whose mind is not, like the Divine Mind, the cause of things, cannot draw this form complete out of his creative spirit: he goes and gathers it first and foremost in the vast treasure of created things, of sensitive nature as of the world of souls, and of the interior world of his own soul. From this point of view he is first and foremost a man who sees more deeply than other men and discovers in reality spiritual radiations which others are unable to discern.[40]

Gilby, in Poetic Experience, a work which Jones did not cite, adopts a position which, though couched in Thomist terminology, interprets poetic experience, which is for him the first requirement of a poet, as experience of the concrete and particular, a reality which is primary and pre-conceptual. His views have considerable affinities with those of Bergson and, in some respects, with Whitehead, whom, indeed, he mentions, "This would agree with Professor Whitehead's view that poetic knowledge is a fragment of the concrete real of primary experience".[41]

The autonomy and objectivity of the work of art is discussed by David Jones in several essays, notably in "Art and Sacrament". He believes that all art is "abstract" and that all art re-presents. Using Hogarth's picture "The Shrimp Girl" as an example, he states:

> It is a 'thing', an object contrived of various materials and so ordered by Hogarth's muse as to show forth, recall and re-present, strictly within the conditions of a given art and under another mode, such and such a reality.[42]

We suppose that the order of the parts of the picture which are constrained by its nature as a painting, its painterly aspect, constitute the abstract side of the work. A painting is "a 'thing' having abstract qualities by which it coheres and without which it cannot be said to exist.[43] Jones goes on:

> It is a signum of that reality and it makes a kind of anamnesis of that reality. What that reality is it is hard to say owing to its complexity. Superficially what is here shown forth under the sign of paint is, I suppose, a female street-vendor's mortal flesh and poor habiliments seen under our subtle island-light in the gay squalor that was eighteenth-century low-life England. Or had this sketch been made in Calais, no matter, or had the girl not been a fish-girl, but a model dressed up to look like one - still no matter, for whatever the accidents of the flesh and blood 'reality' this reality did but supply the raw material for whatever concept the sight of it set in motion in the mind of the painter ... So we can say only one thing for certain: that whatever the material and immaterial elements of that 'reality' may have been, the workings of Hogarth's art gave to the world a signum of that reality under the species of paint. It is this objective sign that we can apprehend and enjoy in the National Gallery, provided that we have the right dispositions.[44]

Though this passage applies to painting, it is equally relevant to poetry. Though art re-presents, the "reality" which it does re-present need not be immediately accessible, in fact its present reality may lie only in its incarnation in the work of art. We may note here a similarity to Whitehead. Only the actual object is real, though it makes itself by prehending eternal forms. Of course, Jones does not go as far as Whitehead in suggesting that only the actual event, the present instant is real, since he accords objective reality to the work of art. However, his notion

of the "here and now", the requirement that the sign be valid in the present, and the recognition that certain signs lose their validity and can only be revived by incorporation into the contemporary work, surely comes very close to the spirit of Whitehead's philosophy, if it does not match its rigour.

The work of art, therefore, is not strictly mimetic. Its representative function is formal or essential rather than slavishly imitative. This is Maritain's view:

> So, because it is subjected in the mind of man, the law of imitation, of resemblance, remains constant for our art, but in a sense purified. It must transpose the secret rules of being in the manner of producing the work, and it must be as faithful and exact, in transforming reality according to the laws governing the work to be done, as science in conforming thereto. What it makes must resemble not the material appearance of things, but some of the hidden significances whose iris God alone sees glittering on the neck of his creatures - and for that very reason it will also resemble the created mind which in its own way discerned those invisible colours. Resemblance, but a spiritual resemblance. Realism, if you like, but transcendental realism.[45]

Such arguments easily lead to abstract, non-representational art, the quest for form which is described by Hulme in "Modern Art" as belonging to the religious rather than the humanist world-view. Hulme, we remember, derived his ideas from Wilhelm Worringer's thesis in Abstration and Empathy, but his hope for a new formalism in art was shared by figures as diverse as Wyndham Lewis and Eric Gill. Gill agreed with Hulme in valuing the medieval, religious approach to art above that of Renaissance humanism. He believed that art should be based on the imagination, not on the physical data provided by the senses:

> Before the Renaissance painters were like the child who said: "first I think and then I draw my think". After the Renaissance they said:"first I look and then I draw my look".[46]

He argued that in medieval times the natural world was primarily of use to the artist as source material or as a kind of dictionary from which he could draw ideas or images to serve as ingredients in the work of art which he was creating: "his imagination was not a camera recording

accurately every appearance; it was a sort of kitchen wherein the food for his mind was prepared, re-created, created anew. Art was indeed re-creation".[47] It is clear both from this work and his autobiography that this was the approach to art which Gill favoured. Though Gill himself delighted in the physical world as is evident from his own writings and David Jones's testimoney, the urge towards form and the inner essence of things may be a retreat from the physical. Hulme certainly saw it as an escepe from the "messiness" of flux. This is a common religious position, an aspect of asceticism, but in orthodox Catholic theology it is condemned. St. Thomas, in particular, delighted in the reality and variety of the created world and exalted the physical. David Jones shared this delight and though he always remained grateful to Gill as his teacher, became sufficiently confident to assert his own sense of the importance of the physical and the actual:

> The concrete, the exact dimensions, the contactual, the visual, the bodily, what the senses register, the assembled data first - <u>then</u> is the imagination freed to get on with the job.[48]

He came to find some of Gill's ideas rather over-simplified and though placing just as much value on the function of the work as sign or symbol, he considered that Gill's practice of symbolism or conventionalism was inadequate:

> His method was deliberate and direct - he, so to say, attacked frontally. If required to carve the figure of a king he would carve a figure wearing a crown - whereas most of us today would be more likely to make a kingly figure by some suggestion or other - obliquely, by some disposition of the design.[49]

Jones chose the oblique method, the ordering or assembling of naturalistic details to reveal the hidden patterns in things. He accepted that it was the artist's role to make "the universal shine out of the particular" and with his particulars he was meticulous. This can be seen most obviously in his painting. Take, for instance, the frontis-piece to <u>In Parenthesis</u>, 1936-1937, where the figure of a soldier appears against a background of military paraphernalia and trench warfare, dishevelled, disoriented and

missing the right boot. Clearly this has symbolic value, yet we know that it is based on a humiliating and terrifying incident experienced by Jones himself. Similarly, though none of his work could be described as naturalistic or representational in the photographic sense, they convince by the accuracy of observed detail. There is the delightfully incongruous ship's cat in the paining of Tristram and Isolt on board ship[50] as well as the accurate detail of the ship's architecture and rigging. In the water-colour, Tir y Blaenau,[51] we see ponies pasted on their background with a disregard for detail which we associate with primitive and neo-primitive art. Yet, undeniably, Jones has managed to capture the bleakness of the Welsh hills and the rough sturdiness of the native ponies. His poetry reflects the same care for detail. We think of the ship-building section, "Redriff" in The Anathemata or of the exhaustive itemisation of Gwenhwyfar's dress in "Mabinog's Liturgy". This concern for accurate detail is seen also in seen also in his fascination with vocabulary and particularly with exotic and technical words whose meaning is often precise, but unfamiliar, forgotten, or obscured by careless usage.

For Jones, a "valid sign" must be created from the real data of experience, experience which is, to some extent, common to those for whom the sign is made. It is through its participation in the "here and how" that it is able to enact the process of anamnesis. This is the second key term in Jones's theory of art and again it is based very largely on Catholic theology and particularly on doctrines relating to the Mass. In a footnote in The Anathemata the poet quoted the definition of Gregory Dix:

> Anamnesis. I take leave to remind the reader that this is a key-word in our deposits. The dictionary defines its general meaning as 'the recalling of things past'. But what is the nature of this particular recalling? I append the following quotation as being clear and to the point: 'It (anamnesis) is not quite easy to represent accurately in English words like "remembrance" or "memorial" having for us a connotation of something absent which is only mentally recollected. But in the scriptures of both the Old and New Testament anamnesis and the cognate verb have a sense

of "recalling" or "re-presenting" before God an event in the past so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects. Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, p.161.[52]

The origin of the term is Christ's injunction at the Last Supper, "Do this for a remembrance of me" which is, of course, repeated at every celebration of the Mass. According to de la Taille, this anamnesis or commemoration enacted by the Priest is an effective and real sacrifice, a new offering of Christ as"Victim" which is nevertheless identical with the original sacrifice of the Passion.[53]

Jones, however, extends the idea of anamnesis to all acts which recall an event from the past so as to make it effective and actual in the present:

Poetry is to be diagnosed as "dangerous" because it evokes and recalls, is a kind of anamnesis of, i.e., is an effective recalling of, something loved.[54]

Repeatedly, Jones applies the word "anamnesis" to the recalling of the dead, both as the prayer of intercession in the Mass and in all rituals or acts which are concerned with commemoration, whether these be laments like the Y Gododdin or the most primitive burial rites of ancient man:

We have ample archaeological evidence to show us that palaeolithic man, whatever else he was, and whatever his ancestors were, was a sacramental animal. We know for instance, that this creature juxtaposed marks on surfaces not with merely utile, but with significance, intent; that is to say a 're-presenting', a 'showing again under other forms', an 'effective recalling' of something was intended.[55]

It is in his essay on "Art and Sacrament" that David Jones attempts to justify his conviction that "the activity called art is, at bottom, and inescapably, a 'religious' activity, for it deals with realities and the real is sacred and religious". His arguments are several, circuitous and not always completely clear. Yet in his essay and in his poetry he does succeed in convincing us that the practice of art and of religion are for him the same activity, although ultimately we may charge him with making religion serve art, rather than the other way about. Let us consider, then, the work of art as "anathemata", as at once a "valid

sign" and an "anamnesis" and therefore something sacred, set apart.

We have already seen that the valid sign "re-presents" some reality in its own medium; this is necessarily an act of recollection, that is, of anamnesis. It is successful or "valid" if the sign is "here and now operative by its effects". In Catholic doctrine, this means a satisfactory enactment of the Mass by priest and congregation; in art it is the correct exercise of judgement to order the work's constituents so that it will have present significance. A successful work of art not only recalls reality, it creates it by bringing about new form:

> That is to say a number of existing shapes (which themselves may or may not require re-shaping) are shifted about; by which activity a form, not previously existent, is created. In so far as form is brought into being there is reality.[56]

We may compare Maritain's statement:"The creator in art is he who discovers a new type-analogy of the beautiful, a new way in which the brilliance of form can be made to shine upon matter".[57] Furthermore, every work of art involves a process of making other, making over, of dedicating the constituents, whether they be the ingredients of the kitchen, the grain for the bread, the colours on the palette or the words of language, to a new end, apart from whatever they have previously been. Thus, they are, in the widest sense, anathemata. Jones explains his use of this term most fully in the Preface to The Anathemata:

> So I mean by my title as much as it can be made to mean, or can evoke or suggest, however obliquely: the blessed things that have taken on what is cursed, and the profane things that somehow are redeemed: the delights and also the 'ornaments', both in the primary sense of gear and paraphernalia and in the sense of what simply adorns; the donated and votive things, the things dedicated after whatever fashion, the things in some sense made separate, being "laid up from other things"; things, or some aspect of them, that partake of the extra-utile and of the gratuitous; things that are the sign of something other, together with those signs that not only have the nature of a sign, but are themselves, under some mode, what they signify. Things set up, lifted up, or in whatever manner made over to the gods.[58]

This passage contains many of the assumptions which made the writing of The Anathemata possible. For David Jones every work of art is an offering to God, a sacrament, whether through deliberate intention of the artist, or symbolically. The rituals and artistic works of primitive man, of the Romans and the Greeks, of Indians and Eskimos all figure the essential activity of creating something which is set apart, the supreme and informing example being the consecration and sacrifice of Christ as enacted at the last Supper and the Crucifixion and re-enacted in every celebration of the Eucharist.

Here it may be useful to discuss the notion of the "extra-utile": Jones insists that every true work of art has about it some element of the gratuitous, some feature which testifies to the free will of the artist and by virtue of which it can be a sign. It is this extra-utile element, he declares, which distinguishes the works of man from those of the beasts. Even the most magnificent animal artefact is created instinctively; there is no freedom of will in the choice and the work is made only for use; it is purely functional. Man's works, on the other hand, even those of the craftsman or strategist, for Jones considers strategy an art, are distinguished by the virtue of judgement and every art product has, over and above its practical function, the quality of being an end in itself. Thus art is evidence for the nature of Man as rational, "A creature which is not only capable of gratuitous acts but of which it can be said that such acts are this creature's hall-mark and sign-manual".[59] So if a work of art is significant of nothing intermediate, it always indicates by virtue of its gratuitous element, man's special nature as a free-willed and rational animal. Moreover, Jones argues, did Man not possess this capability for choice in his works he could not be a moral being. It is only because he can do other, that he can lay claim to the virtues of Art and Prudence; and it is only because he has the "substantial advantage"[60] of a physical body that he can be an artist, a corporal creature making material works. Not only does the gratuitous element in every work of art testify to Man's nature,

it is also a sign or anamnesis of the creation:

> With regard to the gratuitous quality which is said to adhere to Art it is well to remember that theologians say that the creation of the world was not a necessary, but a gratuitous, act. There is a sense in which this gratuitousness in the operations of the Creator is reflected in the art of the creature.[61]

There are, however, difficulties in this notion of the extra-utile, for which Jones stresses here art's gratuitous element, elsewhere he emphasises its use and deplores the division between the purely decorational and the purely utile. As Art becomes a select practice for the few and most human products are mass-produced, their form determined entirely by function, it seems that the works of man are losing their sacramental quality and that the notion of man as man-the-artist is an outmoded one. But for David Jones art is a "truncal activity" and should it be lost to man his free will and rationality would also be lost and the determinist world-view would rule unquestioned.

The wholly utile (or utilitatian) product has its shape predetermined by the use to which it is to be put and this applies equally to some intricately designed mechanism in a space-rocket and to the mass-produced tea-cups on sale in Woolworth's. Though the one may have been conditioned by complex and specific demands of a technical nature while the other conforms to the demands of the market as ascertained by market research, in neither is there any freedom for the artist, any representing of a concept, any element of the sign or the gratuitous. This argument demands some qualification. The engineer who designs the rocket component is, surely, a rational being, realising a concept in material form, and therefore must be an artist. It is only in so far as he loses touch with the actual means of production, the physical materials of this work, that he resigns freedom and responsibility. The workmen to carry out his designs, however, have no freedom at all and their skills are used entirely mechanically. Eric Gill was particularly concerned by the divorce of art and technology, seeing artist and workman in their separate roles as equally slaves of capitalism. The hankering after medieval craftsmanship, the interest in a sort of craft socialism, with or without religious undertones, may be traced back to William Morris, and certainly inspired the communities at

Ditchling and Capel-y-ffyn.[62]

The development of more mass-produced and purely utilitarian products does not free art:

there cannot in fact be any absolutely "gratuitous" work of art - except the universe. Not only is our act of artistic creation ordered to an ultimate end, true God or false god, but it must of necessity, because of its environment, be closely in certain proximate ends affecting the human order; the workman works for wages and the most disincarnate artist would like to influence souls and serve an idea, even if it be only an aesthetic idea. What is required is the perfect practical discrimination between the end pursued by the workman (finis operantis, said the Schoolmen) and the end to be served by the work (finis operis) ... [63]

It was his apprehension for the future of Art and for man as artist and therefore as a rational, moral and religious being which inspired Jones's most despairing fragment:

A, a, a, DOMINE DEUS

I said, Ah! what shall I write?
I enquired up and down.
(He's tricked me before
with his manifold lurking-places).
I looked for His symbol at the door.
I have looked for a long while
at the textures and contours.
I have run a hand over the trivial intersections.
I have journeyed among the dead forms
causation projects from pillar to pylon.
I have tired the eyes of the mind
regarding the colours and lights.
I have felt for His Wounds
in nozzles and containers.
I have wondered for the automatic devices.
I have tested the inane patterns
without prejudice.
I have been on my guard
not to condemn the unfamiliar.
For it is easy to miss Him
at the turn of a civilisation.

I have watched the wheels go round in case I might see the living creatures like the appearance of lamps, in case I might see the Living God projected from the Machine. I have said to the perfected steel, be my sister and for the glassy towers I thought I felt some beginnings of His creature, but A, a, a, Domine Deus, my hands found the glazed work unrefined and the terrible crystal a stage-paste ... Eia, Domine Deus. c. 1938 and 1966.[64]

Yet he continued to belive that "in spite of any appearances, man remains, by definition, man-the-artist".[65] It was this conviction which allowed him to struggle against the ugliness of mass-production and the uniformity of international culture, what he called our "hyper-Alexandrian and megalopolitan situation",[66] to assert individuality and the valid sign.

Art is sacred and sacramental because it produced signs; these signs are significant of some reality, "so of something 'good' so of something that is sacred"[67]; also as we have seen already the art product itself is a new reality, and therefore sacred in its own right. Jones seems to argue, and here he follows Maritain, that man creating a work of art is not only symbolising Divine activity, but also collaborating with the Creator

> they (animals) are luckier than ourselves, they do not have to collaborate with God in making [68]

Art is constructive and creative and through art, says Eric Gill, we experience ourselves as God, "I have said ye are as gods".[69] Gill also believed that art was collaboration in creation, but that that role had been resigned with the rise of post-Renaissance representational art:

> The artist shall no longer be a collaborator with God or so fancy himself. He shall be a critic of creation. He shall no longer make things, but only pictures of things and, first of all, pictures of what rich patrons fancy and painted as such patrons fancy them.[70]

The collaboration argument, as we have said, stems from Maritain, who writes:

> that the artist is as it were an associate of God in the making of acts of beauty; by developing the faculties with which the Creator has endowed him ... and making use of created matter, he creates as it were in the second degree ... Artistic operation does not copy God's creation, but continues it.

This idea is analogous to the theological one which forms such an important part of the arguments of de la Taille and D'Arcy. They assert that every celebration of the Mass furthers the fulfillment of God's will. According

to de la Taille, as interpreted by D'Arcy, Christ is the "glorious Victim" risen from the grave, "who no longer weeps nor suffers agony. He is the Lord of Grace, the Head of the Mystical Body which is risen with him after having been baptised into his death".[72] Therefore, though Christ is present as a victim in each celebration of the Mass, his suffering is past. Through the Mass the congregation is incorporated into the Church which is the visible body of Christ:

> the Resurrection signifies this new Adam risen from the grave where the sins of the old Adam and his descendants were buried, the new head of that Mystical Body whereof we are members. A new solidarity in Christ - a new race shares in the divine nature through Christ risen.[73]

But the Mystical Body is not complete and will not be complete until the end of the ages. However, each celebration of the Mass augments the Church and raises its members to the divine nature. Those who partake of the sacrament of the Mass are literally members of the Body of Christ, they are as Gods, part of the Divinity. But apparently that Divinity, at least in the person of the Son, is not complete and can only become complete through the responses of men. D'Arcy argues that "The motive behind all God's action from the creation of Adam in grace to the restoration of man in Christ and the foundation of the Church was love".[74] But "all love is reciprocal. Our Lord loved his own to the extreme of love and showed it by the shedding of his blood. This is all that a lover could do; and for that act to be profitable there was need of a response, an acceptance, an act on the part of the beloved. Therefore he continues as the passive Victim and the Church is now active and does her part by reciprocating freely the love of Christ, and making it complete and efficacious for herself. This response is the Mass".[75] And he adds, "the Masses which are being celebrated throughout the world are being offered by them (the laiety) as members of the Mystical Body, and the fruit of these Masses is increased or diminished by the degree of holiness they possess".[76]

Therefore, we see that that art which is religious ritual, the celebration of the sacrament is a part of the process, a part of becoming, although we know that in his eternal aspect, God is unchanging and all events are simultaneous. But all art, according to Jones, partakes of the sacramental and therefore all art contributes to the evolution of God, or at least to the Mystical Body of Christ. The anamnesis of the Mass is legitimately extended to all acts of recollection or commemoration, for such acts restore the unity of the Logos:

> The Word, says St. Augustine, is in a way the art of Almighty God, And by the Word the whole divine work was done, omnia per ipsum facta sunt. It is through this Word and his Art that God attains, controls and realises, everything He does. And in the same way it is through his art that the human artist ought to attain, control and realise all his work.[77]

The work of art, through anamnesis, achieves a kind of resurrection in the present. The roles of poet and priest come very close together as art and ritual are identified, just as they were in the ancient oral epics of Babylon and Sumeria. As he is a poet, this figure unites his people by acting as "custodian, remember, embodier and voice of the mythus";[78] as he is a priest, he unites them by the ritual which raises them towards God. In The Anathemata the figure of the artist-priest is a central one; as chief male protagonist of the poem he is the poet, the priest and indeed Christ, both as Victim and Redeemer. He is the principal actor of the poem, but the central "vortex", whose sign is the "axile tree" is neither male nor female.

The Anathemata

Since the inception of this study a number of works, both critical and explicatory, relating to the art of David Jones and in particular to The Anathemata, have been published. Among the most valuable of these is (probably) Rene Hague's A Commentary on the Anathemata of David Jones (Wellingborough, 1977). Although this work is not exhaustive it offers a section by section gloss on the poem as well as an overall guide to the structure of principal themes. It is particularly valuable for its inclusion of many of David Jones's own comments on his poem.

My own major concern in this study of the poem is to show that The Anathemata may be described as a Vorticist poem and should take its place alongside The Cantos and

those other modern long poems which have attempted to use the innovations of modernism, and particularly of imagism, as internal structural principles. We remember Pound's notion that the long Vorticist poem will, like the Japanese Noh plays, be based on one informing image, a central vortex which will generate and condition the rest of the world. We remember also Northrop Frye's principle, in Anatomy of Criticism, that all archetypes are reducible to one another:

> The literary universe, therefore, is a universe in which everything is potentially identical with everything else ... All poetry, then, proceeds as through all poetic images were contained within a single universal body. Identity is the opposite of similarity or likeness, and total identity is not uniformity, still less monotony, but a unity of various things.[79]

The Many are the One, but while this provides for unity and coherence in the world and in art, it is only as differences and particularities are maintained that poetic value and indeed meaning can be achieved. Thus in The Anathemata we do have a central image, itself a "radiant node", a point of generation and of intersection, the "Axile Tree" which is the Cross of Christ. This is the symbol of the One, but it is through metaphoric process, through the discovery of analogy and types, through the metamorphosis of this image into other images and signs that the One is diffracted into the Many and the complex unity of the whole is realised. It will be seen that while David Jones's inspiration is religious rather than humanist his vision transcends simple dualism and moves towards a unitive cosmology which goes beyond the classicist position of T.E. Hulme and perhaps even orthodox theology.

Later in the chapter we shall investigate the major themes and images of the poem, particularly as they are generated from the node of the "axile tree". This generation is rather in the manner of neo-Platonic, theosophic or alchemical systems for the first division is into male and female, the distinction of the Cross from the altar-stone, the tree from the rock, the active male protagonist, the "quester", from the passive yet powerful object of the quest, "margaron", sybil, mother and bride. Among the

most important themes constituted by these images are "the sacrifice of the god-hero, the evolution of man-the-artist, the importance of Woman, the creation of Britain. In the different sections of The Anathemata, as different themes are emphasised, we shall see how these primary images generate further images, and how even single words are chosen to conform with the whole.

However, before proceeding to the specific analysis of the imagery and themes, it will be useful to outline the eight sections of the poem in order to provide context for the discussion which follows.

1. Rite and Foretime

This section, while it opens at a scene which may evoke the present day, the period immediately following the 1914-1918 war, or the last days of Roman Britain, is mostly concerned to trace the evolution of man-the-artist through geology and prehistory from the very beginnings of the world. Emphasis is given to the Pleistocene period and the last great glaciation which created the shape of the earth as we now know it and which saw the emergence of modern man, our direct ancestors and the first artists. Already special notice is given to Britain and Wales, and already all events are related to the one event which was fore-ordained and is in and out of time. The Crucifixion dates, all events before or afterwards:

> From the year of
> the lord-out-of Ur
> about two millennia.
> Two thousand lents again
> since the first barley mow.
> Twenty millennia (and what millennia more)
> Since he became
> man master-of-plastic.[80]

Pre-Christian and even pre-human happenings are shown to be significant prefigurations conditioned by this nodal point:

> Chthonic? why yes
> but mother of us.
> Then it is these abundant ubera, here, under the species of worked lime-rock, that gave suck to the lord? She that they already venerate (what other could they)
> her we declare?

Who else?
And see how they run, the juxtaposed forms,
brighting the vaults of Lascaux; how the linear is wedded
to volume, how they do, within, in an unbloody manner,
under the forms of brown haematite and black manganese on
the graved lime-face, what is done, without,
far on the windy tundra
at the kill
that kindred may have life.[81]

Here, the reference to the Lascaux caves prefigures the ritual of the Eucharist and the sacrifice "without" which buys life for the people. But the reference to the Willendorf Venus (c. 20,000-25,000 BC), while it includes the notion of Mary, mother of God, also extends to the much wider theme of ancient chthonic religions and the power of the mother principle. And by using the Latin words Venus and "ubera" Jones threads in his Roman theme, for it was the Roman and Trojans, as ancestors of the British, who interested Jones rather more than the Greeks. The Trojan influence is also in the passage, latent in the echo from Tennyson's Ulysses

Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy

an illusion which also serves to remind us of the continuity of cultural and poetic tradition.

2. Middle-Sea and Lear-Sea

This section of the poem moves into the realm of ancient history and concerns the journey or argosy of a ship and its crew from some unspecified place in Asia, via Greece and Rome, through the Mediterranean, into the Atlantic and at last to Britain. The period of the journey, the identity of the crew and particularly of the ship's captain are left deliberately problematic. One interpretation is that the captain comes from Troy, that he is first Aeneas (the section opens in Troy) and then his descendant, Brute, the legendary founder of Britain whose exploits in Italy, Greece and Gaul are detailed in Nennius's Historic Britonum and in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Histories of the Kings of Britain. Certainly, some of the ports mentioned coincide with battles and other encounters described by these authors. Jones offered a partial explanation in a letter to William Hayward:

It is a disadvantage of my method (or lack of it!) that the reader is faced with rather sudden and unwarned of changes of occasion, and that caused confusion. So here, the voyage from the eastern Aegean to the port of Piraeus, the harbour of Athens, gets merged in the voyage from the Middle Sea out into the ocean of the West, and so to Britain, which occupies the rest of this section.[82]

On the identity of the skipper he provided Hayward with the following gloss:

its a bit complex, but you've clearly got the general idea. First (as the medieval theologians would prefer it!) there is the literal meaning of the text: the skipper is a Mediterranean padrone and he is described in the section Keel, Ram, Stauros, page 182, as pious, eld, bright-eyed, "of the sea" (marinus). Pius in the sense of Aeneas; indeed Aeneas is much in mind owing to his wanderings, and of his foundational nature in our Western deposits. But, he's a 'caulked old Tritan', a 'hard case'. 'The vine-juice skipper' is, of course, in part drawn from the sea-shanty 'A Yankee Mate and a Limejuice Skipper', but recalls the Dionysiac thing also, the 'ancient skipper', the 'ancient staggerer', the 'Iacchos in his duffle-jacket'. Ischyros with his sea-boots on, 'Agious Ischyros' is one of the Greek epithets used of Our Lord still, in the Latin rite, during the Reproaches, on Good Friday. O, Holy Strong one!

He is 'Diocesan of us' (p.182) and (107) 'gladiatorial vicar of the seas - so he's Peter the Fisherman, with the keys and who drew the sword also Manannan mac Lir of course, see Note 2.

107. Manannan or Manawydan was both navigator and god of, or in some way identified with the element he navigated - and much besides - just as with all those great mythological figures - there's the duality, or rather the multiplicity of function ...[83]

The myth of Trojan Brutus was valued by Jones because, although he knew it to be factually inaccurate, he believed that its very existence and popularity conferred truth upon it. He was not greatly exercised by the question of distinguishing between history and myth since both are inescapably part of our culture. Rather, he sought from both their essential truth. A later note illustrates his attitude to such material:

In this factual community-name (civitas Trinobantum for London) we have the origin of the legendary city of Trinovantum, or Troy Novant, which the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth made an integral part of our national mythological deposit, whereby, through the Trojan, Brute, of the line of Aeneas, Venus and Jove, our tradition is linked with all that that

succession can be made to signify; and seeing what we owe to all that, the myth proposes for our acceptance a truth more real than the historic facts alone discover.[84]

As long as myth and fable have enriched poetry rather than merely served as decoration, they have been recognised as alternative ways of presenting what is felt to be true about the world or human nature. The revival of myth from its decline into ornament in the nineteenth century has accompanied the growing realisation of the uncertainty of so-called fact whether in history or in science and the increasing recognition that all accounts of experience, "poetic" or "scientific" are selective interpretations. It would be wrong, therefore, to suggest that "Middle Sea and Lear Sea" was simply an account of the journey of a fictional hero; that theme is only one of its many aspects. It is also an imaginative recreation of all the journeys of the early Mediterranean sea-peoples, the Pelasgians, Phoenicians and Achaeans. As such, it is informed by archaeological and historical findings. Hence it is marked by accurate descriptions of ancient ship-building, specific nautical landmarks and convincing weather conditions. But as it recalls the fact of successive nations whose empires or fortunes were made on the sea, from the early Phoenicians until the supremacy of the British Navy in modern times, at the same time it commemorates their legends and their heroes. Ulysses is remembered in this section - "they say he made Thule" - and so also are Jason, Triton, son of Poseidon, and even Dionysus:

> Is it the Iacchos
> in his duffle jacket
> Ischyros with his sea-boots on? [85]

Here, as we have seen, Iacchos can be a type of Christ, as are the other sacrificed gods, Adonis and Attis. But here are remoter analogies implicating British material, for Taliesin, the legendary bard of Wales, and St. Patrick, like Iacchos/Dionysus were captured by pirates. Moreover as poet and priest respectively they embrace two of the key functions of the protagonist of the poem.

The theme of the journey in the poem concerns not only the geographical voyage from the Mediterranean to the English Channel, but also the journey through time which is the development of our western civilisation. This section opens with the fall of Troy and the death of Hector, another type of Christ, and then, inspired very largely by Virgil and the Aeneid, moves on to the foundation and greatness of Rome. Virgil and Virgil's Rome are pivotal in the poem because not only was Rome a recreation, an anamnesis of Troy, but at the same time it was a forecast both of the Catholic Empire and even the City of God, as well as of the foundation of Britain and the British Empire. Virgil, who lived in the difficult age of Augustan imperialism, was fully aware of the ambivalences of the civilisation which he glorified, a civilisation based on a city which, in one sense, could be the universal city, the polis embracing all men in spiritual and material unity, but which differently perceived was already the "hyper-Alexandrian megalopolis", the corrupt and degraded capital of a crassly materialist empire. David Jones's idea of Virgil is taken very largely from the writings of W.F. Jackon Knight [86] who credited the Latin poet with almost superhuman percipience. But Jones is also remembering Virgil's importance to the Middle Ages, as, for instance, to Dante, and indeed his infiltration into early Welsh tradition where his name became the synonym for a chemist or Wizard.[87] In The Anathemata the roles of the magician, priest and poet are frequently fused. Virgil is also important to Jones because of his famous prophecy in the Fourth Eclogue,[88] which by seeming to foretell the coming of Christ is at once a sign and a justification of prefiguration as well as of the poet's role as prophet. Moreover, it is yet another strand linking pre-Christian and post-Christian times. Indeed, in his concern to show that time, as it were, radiates from the central point of the crucifixion rather than coming before or after, Jones seems implicitly to be denying the damnation of the pagans. By his assertion that every artistic act or act of anamnesis is in some sense sacred and in some sense a celebration of the Eucharist, he includes the whole of humanity in the

Christian community. It is only as man seems to abandon his role as artist that perhaps he is truly in danger of being damned. Clearly, this is not orthodox Catholicism but it is a view which must, I think, be inferred from the poem. In David Jones's Heaven there is room even for Neanderthal man.[89]

> (He would lose, not any one
> from among them.
> Of all those given him
> he would lose none).

The focal point of the crucifixion is kept in mind by a dating technique which we have already seen in "Rite and Foretime". In "Middle Sea and Lear Sea" the device is used to locate remote events of ancient and prehistory not only to the crucifixion but also to us:

> Twelve hundred years
> close on
> since of the seven grouped Shiners
> one doused her light.
> Since Troy fired
> since they dragged him
> widdershins.[90]

We notice here the double reference to Christ, one by dating, the other through Hector as a prefiguring type.

> Six centuries
> and the second Spring
> and a new wonder under heaven:
> man-limb stirs
> in the god-stones
> and the kouroi
> are gay and stepping it
> but stanced solemn.[91]

In this second passage Jones refers to archaic Greek art, the onset of the Golden Age, a springtime in the ages which did not recur until

> ... on west-portals
> in Gallia Lugdunensis
> when the Faustian lent is come
> and West-wood springs new.[92]

The cyclical pattern in history suggested by Spengler is useful to Jones because it allows him to draw analogies between periods, not only of growth, but of decline, such

as the important parallels he discerns between the decline of Rome in the time of Christ, the collapse of civilisation in Roman-Celtic Britain as the Saxons advanced, and the decadence at the end of the first World War. All of these are periods of the "waste land", periods for which T.S. Eliot's poem and the anthropological and cultural contexts of that poem are important signs. In fact, Jones makes extensive use of the Grail legends and their interpretations so that a knowledge of Jessie Weston's From Ritual to Romance is at least as important for understanding this poem as for "The Waste Land". Jones used the notion of the waste land not simply negatively but as a unifying device which brings in the matter of Britain as well as identifying all the "freers of the waters", from the pre-Christian Attis and Adonis to the post-Christian figure of Peredur or Perceval, in the archetypal figure of Christ.

This view of time as radiating from a central point, the intersection of time and eternity, for which as we shall see later the Cross is the supreme symbol, means that although this second section deals for the most part with events in ancient history it can flash forwards without incongruity to later occasions or persons when these appear to be equally valid instances of a mythical or persisting pattern or truth. Thus, a stone Kore of the sixth century B.C. can comprehend those who come before and after her:

> by the radial flutes for her chilton, the lineal,
> chiselled hair,
> the contained rhythm of her
> is she Elenê Argive
> or is she transalpine Eleanore
> or our Gwenhwfar
> the Selenê of Thulê
> West-Helen?
> She's all that and more
> all korai, all parthenai made stone.[9 3]

Or, somewhat differently, the dangers of the Scillies are illustrated by incidents which occurred long after the arrival of the various peoples who helped to populate the islands of Britain:

Her menhirs
DIS MANIBUS of
many a Schiller's people
many men
of many a Clowdisley's ship's company.[94]

Nevertheless, despite this freedom in time, the section confines itself on the whole to the Celtic and Roman contribution to the British tradition and does not touch on the arrival or influence of the Saxons or Vikings. These Northern peoples make their appearance in the next section, "Angle-land". Thus, although there are many flashbacks and palimpsests of time, the first half of the poem does move gradually forwards in building up the history of Britain in the context of the development of the West.

3. Angle-land

Did he strike soundings off Vecta Insula
or was it already the gavelkind igland?[95]

These opening lines describe the Isle of Wight, and the change of name signifies the replacement of the Romans by the Anglo-Saxons, in this case, the Jutes who were supposed to have settled in this area and in Kent. Their role in the creation of Britain is stressed by Jones for they are believed to have had a more advanced civilisation than other Anglo-Saxon tribes, and there is evidence that in their areas there was a higher culture and a greater assimilation of classical customs than in other parts of England.

Geographically, this section moves from the very south of England up the east coast of Britain to the far north of Scotland. In doing so, it also travels forwards in time to include the Scandinavians and even Nelson, born at Burnham-thorpe in Norfolk:

past the weathered thorps and
the Thorpe
that bore, that bred
him whom Nike did bear.[96]

North again, in Scotland, we touch on the material of Anglo-Saxon literature, the sagas, the Romances and, much closer to the present, the internecine wars of the Germanic peoples:

I speak of before the whale-roads or the keel-paths were from Orcades to the Lord-havens or the greyed green wastes that they strictly grid
quadrate and number on the sea-green Quadratkarte
one eight six one G
for the fratricides
of the latter day, from east-shore of Iceland
bis Norwegen
(O Balin O Balan!
how blood you both
the Brudersee
towards the last phase
of our dear West).[97]

4. Redriff

Or
did he make the estuary?
was the Cant smiling
and the Knock smooth?
Did our Tidal Father bear him
by Lower Hope to Half Reach?
Did he berth on the Greenland or was she moored
in the Pool?
Did he tie up across the water
or did she toss at the Surrey
shore?[98]

With this return to London, the poet moves into a celebration of his own City from its earliest days to contemporary times, demonstrating his affection for and knowledge of the churches, streets and docks which formed one half of his heritage. Appropriately then, this part of the poem is a tribute to his maternal grandfather, ship's joiner and master craftsman, and therefore himself an artist. It seems fitting too, that Bradshaw should be on the mother's side of the family, for his role as the native Briton, the stay-at-home, is much closer to that of the various female voices in the poem, though of course he does epitomise the virtue of art, which allies him to the poet and the priest.

Like the other sections of the poem, this part is not set in any definite period of time though the poet's grandfather would in fact have been Victorian. It ranges across time by referring to and thus encapsulating the traditions and customs of the Thames dockyards and the city of London. This strong foundation of fact then allows the poet to draw in other maritime legends and myths so that once again the matter of Britain is implicated in the total culture of the West:

> Not for as many cubic fathoms of best Indies /ignum vitae as'ld stock us till we re-sheave the blocks for master-bargees plying the Styx.
> ... ...
> And, as for next Thor's Day's night tide
> tell the Wop, to-go-to
> Canute. [99]

We note that David Jones mixes mythical and even legendary material with a meticulous care for factual detail. This can be seen later in his description of Gwenhwyfar, who is dressed in a way which is consistent with that of the wife of a high-ranking Roman-British official. This attention to accuracy was seen by Jones as part of his artistic duty; he must realise as closely as possible, whether in words or in paint, the artistic concept which inspired his work. In Ebenezer Bradshaw he recognises and honours an artist of the same, painstaking kind. For him too, no matter what the end of his art, it was his duty to devote the whole of his craftsmanship to making it as perfect as possible in its own kind. This illustrates the Thomist distinction between Art and Prudence, for in Art the action is directed towards the product, while in Prudence it is concerned immediately with the moral good. So, Bradshaw, if he were given the task of constructing the Cross on which Christ would be crucified, would be obliged, as an artist, to make that Cross the best instrument of its kind that he was capable of fashioning:

> As sure as I was articled, had I the job of mortisin' the beams to which was lashed and roved the Fault in all of us, I'ld take m'time and set that aspen transom square to the Rootless Tree [100]

5. The Lady of the Pool

This section begins with the final disembarkation of the mysterious captain. Rene Hague explains that this skipper is not the same man, though of the same type, as the captain in the previous section.

we have moved back some four hundred years or more in time. 'The setting', D. writes to D.M.C., 12 March 1953, 'is toward the end of the middle ages There were a number of reasons necessitating this. For one thing she (the L. of the P.) had to represent to some extent the British sea thing which rose only after the end of the 15th century, so that the figure had to combine the Hogarthian, Turneresque,

even Dickensian worlds with the Catholic world of "Dick Whittington", Chaucer, Langland, Geoffrey of Monmouth's Trojan-London myth and so on and so on.[101]

The opening lines reflect this consciousness of the wealth and heterogeneity of London's history:

> Did he meet Lud at the Fleet Gate? did he count the top-trees in the anchored forest of Llefelys under the White Mount?
>
> Did ever he walk the twenty-six wards of the city, within and extra, did he cast his nautic eye on her clere and lusty under kell in the troia'd lanes of the city?
> And was it but a month and less from the septimal month, and did he hear, seemly intuned in East-Seaxna-nasal (whose nestle-cock polis but theirs knows the sweet gag and in what urbs would he hear it if not in Belin's oppidvm, the greatest burh in nordlands?)[102]

The allusion to Lud and Llefelys, which comes from the Mabinogion, reminds us of the ancient link between the Welsh Britons and London. We are also reminded that the head of the hero Bran was, according to legend, buried under the White Mount or Tower, and that its presence there was a guarantee of Britain's integrity:

> And when it was buried, that was one of the Three Happy Concealments, and one of the Three Unhappy Disclosures when it was disclosed, for no plague would every come across the sea to this Island so long as the head was in that concealment.[103]

According to the legend, Arthur himself caused the head to be dug up for he wished to show that he maintained his hold over Britian independent of any such supernatural aid. The reference to Bran is significant; he appears several times in the poem for he too is a saviour who gave his life for his people. Possessed of certain magical or god-like qualities, he is one of the identities of the male protagonist of the poem and when leading his army across the Llinon river in Ireland (the Shannon of Liffey) he makes a bridge of his own body, he thereby becomes the Pontifex, a type of Christ:

> Bendigeidfran (Bran) came to land and a fleet with him, towards the bank of the river. 'Lord', said his noblemen, 'thou knowest the peculiarity of the river: none can go through it, nor is there a bridge over it. What is thy

counsel as to a bridge? said they. 'There is none' said he, 'save he that is chief, let him be a bridge. I will myself be a bridge'.[104]

In the next lines of the poem we find ourselves walking the city with the captain, through the twenty-six wards whose names and administration dated from medieval times. Again, Jones uses an echo from a earlier writer, the Scottish poet, Dunbar, to show the unity of the entire Island. The frequent quotations, echoes and half-echoes from other poets reinforce our sense of the continuity of our literary tradition. These echoes are particularly effective when the poem is read aloud and it should be remembered that despite the prosy appearance of many sections of The Anathemata it is very much a poem intended for the ear.

"Troia'd lanes" is a reminder of the mythical Trojan inheritance, but also refers to the maze-like streets and so indirectly to the thesis of Jackson Knight in Cumaean Gates that there was in the complex nature of so many city-plans a religious significance which is also the reason behind many mazes.[105] Often these mazes were intended to make some treasure inaccessible to the intruder, or particularly difficult of attainment by the quester. In The Anathemata this treasure can be a hidden pearl, it can be the Holy Grail, it can be Christ or the ransomed world which Christ himself won.

Having thus woven in the theme of ancient Troy, Jones includes the power of imperial Rome - "the septimal month" - and moves past its decline to the arrival of the East Saxons, the men of Essex, whose accent we gather from the poem may not be that much different from modern Cockney. In the parenthetical clauses which follow, a similar progress through London's history is portrayed through a skilful deployment of vocabulary. The classical and somehow universal "polis" becomes a specifically Roman "urbs", (to which, however, cling suggestions of imperial power and Catholic ceremony) then declines into the more local "oppidum", town of Berlin, a legendary king, and finally becomes the "burh" known to the Scandinavian and Viking invaders.

Almost immediately the captain encounters the Lady of the Pool who, despite the title which relates her to the naiads and water nymphs as well as the Ladies of the Lake and of the Fountain in Welsh and Arthurian romance, is here a Cockney lavender seller of easy virtue and some experience. She could well be every girl that every sailor has in every port. (The Pool of course, is the Pool of London). She may owe something in conception to Joyce's Molly Bloom or even to the anonymous cockney voices in The Waste Land, but nevertheless she becomes Jones's own creation with a very particular identity. She embodies the spirit of London, and by extension the whole of Britain, but remains very much a woman of the people, whether of the early Celts, the Saxon tribes or of medieval and modern London. David Jones himself sprang from the artisan class and both his major works, In Parenthesis and The Anathemata, express the consciousness of the "other ranks", the lower orders, though they reach also to kings, wizards and mythic heroes. What emerges from his writings is that the tradition of a culture, though it may be remembered and preserved by the poets and artists, is nevertheless not the private property of that elite but belongs to the whole people who, indeed, increase and enrich it. Thus, quotations from the classics, from works of scholarship and from the poets are found side by side with snippets of folk-lore, nursery-rhymes and tags from the army.

The Lady of the Pool, the female protagonist or principle, who speaks for the first time in this section,[106] has a dramatic role which is not accorded to the male protagonist. This may be because one of his identities is that of the bard who narrates the whole poem. The bardic mask is dropped once when the poet recalls his own experience:

> If this, though sure, is but allegory
> at all events
> and speaking most factually
> and, as the fashion now requires, from observed data:
> On this night, when I was a young man in France, in
> Gallia Belgica, the forward ballista-teams of the
> Island of Britain green-garlanded their silent three-
> o-threes for this I saw and heard their cockney song

> salute the happy morning; and later, on this same morning certain of the footmen of Britain, walking in daylight, upright, through the lanes of the war-net to outside and beyond the rusted trip-belt, some with gifts, none with ported weapons, embraced him between his fossa and ours, exchanging tokens.[107]

This, despite the Roman trappings, is an account of an incident in World War I during which Jones served as a private soldier in the London Welsh Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. However, the bardic role is not entirely shed for it was characteristic of the bards that they accompanied their chieftains into battle and even fought alongside them.[108]

But the Lady of the Pool speaks only as a character within the poem though even in this section her identity shifts as easily as that of the male protagonist. After we have come to accept her as an illiterate but generous light-of-love, suddenly she reveals her ancient wisdom, her skill in necromancy, her kinship to the dreaded Morgan le Fay.[109] She seems earthy, fleshy, real, but she is also supernatural, a myth who asserts the reality of that myth. Discussing the sirens she teaches the captain:

> O, they was real
> bodily quicksand mammals alright, captain, though granted of a Faéry genus ...
> I do affirm: All that is comprised under mermaid is no mirage.[110]

Then, in a startling transformation she acquires a new dignity and significance:

> We are a water-maid
> fetch us a looking-glass!
> a comb of narwhal ivory, a trident
> and a bower anchor -
> and the Tower lion
> nor twisk his lasher.
> Here is our regnant hand:
> this ring you see upon it were gave us long since by a' ancient fisher; 'tis indulgenced till there be no more sea:
> kiss it.
> No, no, on y'r marrow-bone - though you hooked behemoth, you shall kneel!
> This bollard here
> where keels tie, come from all quarters of a boisterous world,
> hand us to it to sit upon.[111]

Is is not too much to see the Lady in this role, not simply as a mermaid, but also as Britannia and at the same time the perscnification of the Church. Hers is the Tower and the Royal Lion, here also, it seems, is St. Peter's ring and surely the bollard she demands to sit on is the Rock of St. Peter, but also the omphalos, the central oracular stone and ultimately the earth itself of which she is the personification. For though the male principle in the poem is more active, more adventurous, though he has the roles of poet, priest and even god, the female is his inspiration and his genetrix, his protector and his bride. Without her, both as she is Sophia - Wisdom and mother of the Logos,[112] and as she is material - the consenting flesh - there could be no Creation and no Christian incarnation, for these two events are analogous. David Jones accords an importance to the female principle which reduces the omnipotence of God as Father and Son, and is more in keeping with a Mother Goddess religion. So although in some of her aspects the Lady is presented as a dramatic voice within in the poem, in her more powerful and universal form she is the motivating force of the entire poem and all the actions within it.

This entire section is almost wholly taken up by the Lady's monologue as she addressed the sea-captain, the latest in a long line of conquests, whom she regales by telling stories about his predecessors! "They come and they go, captain".[113] The first part, however, seems to be devoted to a description of old London churches and their traditions and to acquaintancing the captain with the history of the city. We discover that the Lady has learned much of this from a former lover, an Oxford student and schoolman, who seems to have had much in common with Duns Scotus "a seraph for sub-distinctions".[114] Her next tale is of a freestone mason who appears to have come from a mixed Kentish and Roman tradition (like the Jutes in "Angle-Land"). Her encounter with him took place under the city walls and he seems to have idealised her as the personification of Rome, the ideal whose reality was the imperial fragmentation and collapse. It is difficult to place this mason's time in

history; sometimes he appears to be a Roman-Briton in the Dark Ages, at others, according to Hague, he is a soldier in the "Royal East Kents, raised in the sixteenth century as one of the 'independent companies' serving in the Netherlands against the Spanish".[115]

> When I were
> a young man in France impressed for service in Artois
> an' drafted to Ordnance, an ingeniator out o' Burgundy,
> but a Breton b' birth, tells me that at Augustodunum,
> the great works there, was, in times far far back,
> reared of men, like those of my mob, from Kent, and
> how from the provinces of this island came the best
> artists in those days [116]

Whoever this mason was, he remembered the Golden Age of Roman-British civilisation with admiration and regret, apparently from a period of decline.

The Lady continues the tale of her sea-faring lovers. The first she mentions is the skipper of the Margaron, sister-ship to the Troy Queen.[117] We may feel that if the Troy Queen represents the Trojan-Roman inheritance, perhaps the Margaron may bring in the sea-farers of Scandinavia and Ireland, for it was they who first imported walrus-tusk (the Margaron's freight) into Britain for ivory and certainly it was the Celtic influence which was strong in the tradition and practice of magic. It seems that Jones is trying here to weave in the Welsh and magical strands of the poem.

The next captain, whose ship is the Mary, comes from Aleppo apparently because of a reference in Macbeth: "Her husband's to Aleppo gone" and "Though his bark cannot be lost/Yet it shall be tempest-tost" (Macbeth I,iii)[118] His voyage has multiple allegorical significances including the bringing of Christianity to Britain, the period of Christ's gestation and, analogously, the period of his mission and passion, his argosy to redeem Mankind and ransom the Church. At the same time, it is of course an anamnesis of all the voyages of the peoples who came to Britain and created her identity as well as those voyages of the British naval and merchant ships which established her sea-born Empire.

It is difficult to follow the sequence of events, for the Lady is garrulous and rambles in her talk. This story is interrupted by the long boast of her power from which I have already quoted, a passage in which we leave the adventures of the sea-farers and come to the Lady herself. However, she recollects herself and returns to her theme, describes battles and the ship's crew, who seem to be uncommonly similar in composition to the companions of In Parenthesis, Londoners and Welshmen. And, as in In Parenthesis, there is a Welsh boast, this time by the boatswain from Milford. This boast is retold to us at third hand:

> Dont eye me, captain
> for I did but relate him as I were told, what I had of Ned Mizzen, what he had of the late Ben Backstay's boozing partner as was in her that trip[119]

The rambling discourse of the Lady of the Pool with her tales within tales, her digressions and confusions, does bewilder; but at the same time it demonstrates the process of preserving and enriching the "mythus". Through her monologue we see anamnesis at work, and it is significant how often words to do with recalling and story telling appear in her account: "they all be apt at their rehersals, captain, what was upon a time and long since";[120] "or should my re-teller have told me untrue";[121] "But to my tale/that I regaled my mason with";[122] "The Boatswain from Milford,/ for each circumstance finding antique comparison";[123] the passage on false story-tellers;[124] "And those as after them/ whose fathers shall relate to them of these old times/before them";[125] and so on. The Lady is handing on her culture, acting here as a female bard, transmitting the tradition, perhaps not always accurately, but significantly. Even the mistakes can be important:

> Now so be that
> he sweared by the Tree of Chester
> by a certain Jessy Mowers and by the owls, with many darroes an' dammoes, Dukes and Jews and B' their god's great athlete, Samson, and by Cassandra, as I take to be Welsh for Delilah, though these two mortal women seem scarce sorted, yet truly both was wheedlers.[126]

Jones interprets this passage in his footnote:

> The Lady of the Pool of London is here giving her Cockney version of: Iesu Mawr, Great Jesus; y diawl, the devil; daro, colloquial for dammit; damnio, damn; Duwcs, colloquial for Duw; Duw, God; Samson, St. Samson of Dol; Cas Andras, andras is colloquial for the deuce and cas means hateful.[127]

Despite her mistakes, the Lady is translating the unfamiliar terms into what she knows and thereby is creating something which may not be in point to point correspondence with the original story, but neverthelss is true to the fabric of her own culture. We notice how easily unfamiliar names become women: "Jessy Mowers". "Cassandra", and how this conforms to the Lady's general sense of the importance and power of womankind. "Owls" too is a fruitful mistake, for the owl was not only the symbol of wisdom and Minerva's bird as had already been mentioned in the Oxford passage, [128] but it was also a Druidic symbol and thus represents the old Celtic magical lore which is so close to the surface of the Lady's thinking.

It might be as well here to comment on David Jones's use of notes. In the Preface he himself says of them:

> I have a last point that I wish to get clear. Although in the notes to the text and in this apology I refer to or cite various authorities and sources that does not mean that this book has any pretensions whatever of a didactic nature. I refer to those sources only to elucidate a background. As often as not I have no means of judging the relative accuracy of these data. I refer to them as a traveller might, in making a song or story about a journey he had taken from his home through far places and back. He may have been impressed by the clarity of a waterfall here, by the courage and beauty of the inhabitants there, or by the note of a bird elsewhere. And these phenomena would be deployed throughout his song as providing part of the content and affecting the form of that song. Such a person might choose to gloss what he was writing, or to break off from his narrative in order to tell his audience what the locals averred of those falling waters, or what the anthropologists had established with regard to the ancestry of those inhabitants, or how the ornithologists maintained that that bird-song was the song of no bird known to them. Such glosses might be made in order to explain some 'how' or 'why' of the relevant text.
>
> The notes, because they so often concern the sounds of the words used in the text, and are thus immediately relevant to its form, are printed along with it, rather than at the back of the book. Butthis easy availability would be a disadvan-

tage if it detracted attention from the work itself. So I ask the reader when actually engaged upon the text, to consult these glosses mainly or only on points of pronounciation. For other purposes they should be read separately.[129]

Jones intended his poetry to be heard, and clearly the interruption of the notes would destroy the aural fabric of rhythm, rhymes and resonance which form such a powerful feature of the poem. On the other hand, the work is too long to be read aloud without any kind of interval, and its eight sections which are themselves divided into sub-sections and paragraphs, do allow for the consultation of the glosses. Jones himself in the passage quoted above suggests that a tale-teller, such as he clearly aspires to be, might well pause in his narrative to explain a point or to provide an interesting sidelight on the story. As we have seen, this discursive style is practised by the Lady of the Pool. In an oral rendition of the poem, therefore, the matter of the notes might well be conveyed less formally than in the literary text. However, the notes, though they may not be part of the "poetic" text, are inescapably part of the complete work. Without them we lose much of the richness and significance of the poem, and it is only in the unlikely event that we manage completely to assimilate them, that we can read the text without their aid. One of their most valuable functions is that they provide the poetic text with a context, a context which in our dispersed and fragmented civilisation is not automatically available to us. Thus though Jones refers to innumerable authorities in his preface and in the notes, we ourselves are not obliged to consult these works if we pay close attention to the text and the notes. Between them they weave a fabric in which all the essential references become internal to the work, so that an initially elusive section may be illuminated by a passage elsewhere. In this, it seems to me, there is a parallel between the poetic text of The Anathemata and Pound's Cantos, though in Pound's case the equivalent of the notes would be the rest of his collected works including the complete prose writings. It takes a disciple with the devotion of Hugh Kenner to collate such a huge body of material, but eventually Pound's work too

may be seen as a self-contained, self-explanatory universe. Yet neither work is hermetic. Each of them encourages us to plumb our tradition for ourselves, to increase our own knowledge. They send us to source.

But from this digression we must return to the digressions of the Lady of the Pool. Eventually she finished her retelling of the tale she told her mason; not so much because it had ended, but because she had run out of breath: "After what narrating I were something put for wind".[130] She turns then from her memories to address the captain directly, in fact to deliver something of a homily, describing to him the various sacred places of the city, the altars or burial stones, old churches and walls under which lie the ancient heroes of Britain, London's tutelary spirits:

> aged viriles buried under
> that from Lud's clay have ward of us that be his townies -
> and certain THIS BOROUGH WERE NEVER FORCED,
> cap-tin!![131]

One cannot escape the impression that the Lady is here speaking of herself and that, like the city, she may never have been forced, but certainly yielded to the foreigner more than once of her own free will.

At the end of the section, the Lady warns the captain of the approach of winter and suggests that his sojourn with her, like that of his predecessors, is coming to an end. She sends him back to sea, becoming that Lady of Good Voyage welcomes and despatches her sailors from her island promontories. Under a less favourable aspect however, she may also be the enchanting siren or ensnaring mermaid:

> You'd best weigh
> you'd best be off, skipper
> you're wrong side the Pillars
> for this tide o' the year
> you in y'r carvel-built - an' look at her fished spars!
> Lorks! you ancient man
> you'd best weigh!
> I'ld make a whale of a mere-maid, captain, had I scales to m' belly.[132]

She blesses the crew with her bunches of lavender and demands the captain's mercy for the pretty boatswain's boy before turning back to ply her trade:

> m' living flower?
> Who'll buy my sweet lavender? [133]

6. Keel, Ram, Stauros

In contrast to the overwhelming feminity of "the Lady of the Pool", the sixth section, "Keel, Ram, Stauros" is decidedly masculine in flavour. The narration is taken over again by the poet, and as in the previous two parts, opens with a question:

> Did he hear them bawling a Frigg-day's ichthyophagous
> feast
> at the Belling Gate? [134]

This device of a question, sometimes followed by a response, often by more questions, is a favourite device of Jones. It occurs throughout his work, notably in The Sleeping Lord. One reason for it may be the poet's unwillingness to assert, his refusal to plump for one possibility which will exclude other possibilities. In the words of the Lady:

> I will not say it shall be so
> but, captain, rather I would say:
> You never know! [135]

and again, in this section, in the poet's own voice, overlaid by T.S. Eliot and "Oranges and Lemons":

> I do not know!
> I do now know!
> I do not know what time is at
> or whether before or after [136]

Another reason might be that the question is particularly effective orally, allowing the elaboration of parallel structures where half-line may answer half-line, clause unfold clause, and sentence respond to sentence. This device echoes and deliberately recalls the half-lines of Old English, the response of the Litany and the parallalism of Biblical prose.

At the end of the previous section we were warned that Holy Cross Day, September 14th, was approaching [137] and appropriately "Keel, Ram, Stauros" is a celebration of the Cross, this central image of the poem, under three of its most important guises. The Keel is the keel and foundation of all the voyaging ships; the Ram is the battering ram of the Roman armies, all engines of war, Christ conquering. Stauros is the Cross itself, the maypole, all trees and all scaffolds, Ygdrasil, the axis of the world. Each manifestation melts imperceptibly into the next, or is described in terms of the others in a series of highly stylised metaphorical substitutions. At the very beginning the captain himself, the poem's hero, is identified with his ship:

> He looks a bit of a clencher-guild
> himself
> His bends are of thick stuff! [138]

Then again he becomes the captain, the master of his ship which reverts to its usual female status:

> Who else should they choose
> to handle the bitch [139]

There follows a passage where the importance of the keel in the architecture of a ship is described quite accurately, but in vocabulary which unmistakably establishes an analogy with Christ: "Yardstick, prime measure";[140] "roved/ or lashed".[141]

Rapidly, the tree changes first to a gibbet, then to a Roman weapon of war. Roman rituals, both the public, state ceremonies and the more esoteric, imported rites of Attis and Mithras are introduced, while military traditions from Roman and Old German times up to World War I are evoked: "Storm-goat, rodded in the Aesir's yard";[142] "Given pet agnomina";[143] "Off to the secret list".[144]

Such is the tree, horizontal. "Vertical'd" again, it becomes the Cross, first the maypole of spring, or the oak of the Druids, then the Christian Cross itself on the day of its discovery, "the glad invention morning".[145] Happily for David Jones, this feast is celebrated on May 3rd so that

it coincides with the older Mayday rites. Even more fortunately, the Cross was supposed to have been rediscovered by St. Helen, wife of Constantious Chlorus and mother of Constantine the Great, who according to popular tradition was of British birth.[146] Jones fruitfully confounds this Helen with Helen of Troy and also, as she is wife of the emperor who was "REDDITOR LUCIS AETERNAE" [147] and mother of the Constantine who did so much to bring Christianity to the Roman Empire, with Mary, mother of Christ.

After this passage, when the Christian Cross has become a sign of all sacred or venerated symbols, the tree turns back into the keel and we find ourselves once again at sea. This time the ship is unmistakably the Christian church, its crew mankind and its captain Christ, certain now, after the tempest, of safe harhour and salvation. Nevertheless, the captain is still also Dionysus, or Manawydan, or

> The old padrone
> the ancient staggerer
> the vine-juice skipper. [148]

"Pious, eld, bright-eyed", he seems in many ways most un-Christlike, yet he is our "diocesan", our bishop and shepherd. Perhaps, unexpectedly and audaciously, he is not only Christ the Son, but also God the Father who

> would berth us
> to schedule. [149]

7. Mabinog's Liturgy

This is the penultimate section and it brings us back to Britain, dry land and the voices of the women of the island. On p.200 there is a note which explains the title:

> Mabinogion ... The singular is mabinogi ... the repertoire of a mabinog ... a tyro bard; and meaning also a tale of infancy as in the tale called Mabinogi Iesu Christ.

Thus, Jones may be deprecating his own skill and at the same time and more importantly, celebrating the birth and infancy of Christ. Yet although this part of the poem does treat of Christmas it is still dated by the central event of the crucifixion and the introduction of the section

stresses the events of the Passion before moving through them to the Incarnation.

> Thirty-three Janus nights gone
> since the night
> of the showing
> to great Estates
> since three dukes venerunt;
> halted Arya-van
> at Star-halt.[150]

Again, this use of chronology allows the poet to recall the Roman and European tradition and to situate it around the crucifixion. But having stressed the primary importance of Easter, the poet moves through a series of negative references to Christmas and the celebration of the Virgin Mary:

> Not Lalla, lalla, lalla
> not rockings now
> nor clovered breath for the health of him as under the strawd crucks that baldachin'd in star-lit town where he was born, the maid's fair cave his dwelling.[151]

Other mythical female figures are disparaged to Mary's advantage; first Helen of Troy, then Aphrodite, then Britain's Gwenhwyfar. Once more, this is a negative lead into the main scene of the section, Gwenhwyfar's attendance at Christmas Mass:

> more lovely than our own Gwenhwyfar
> when to the men of this Island
> she looked at her best
> at midnight
> three nights after the solstice-night.[152]

Despite the earlier disclaimer, the poet approaches the transcendental virtue and beauty of Mary through the earthly beauty of Gwenhwyfar, whom he celebrates in terms of the goddesses and whom he clothes in all the riches obtainable by the traders of the Dark Ages and even by the gods of the Celts:

> furnishings of polar
> ivory
> to obtain which
> who but Manawydan himself[153]

This section returns us to the opening scene of the whole poem where in the last days of Roman Britain a feast was being celebrated, a mass or royal supper, maybe even an appearance of the Holy Grail. Here it resolves itself into the Midnight Mass, but a midnight Mass which we are conscious may be the last of its kind, for Arthur is absent, at war, and Gwenhwyfar and Mordred (medraut) have betrayed him. Civilisation itself seems to be ending, yet in this moment is a respite, a time for joy and celebration. We move away from the lit hall, into the countryside where the beasts and the Celtic witches still hold sway. The voice of the poet melts imperceptibly into that of the ancient mothers. But on this night their magic is harmless, they tell "their aves/unreversed" and they too claim affinity with the Mother of God:

> Sisters, not so jealous! Someone must be chosen and forechosen - it stands to reason! After all there should be solidarity in woman. No great thing but what there's a woman behind it, sisters. Begetters of all huge endeavour we are. The Lord God may well do all without the aid of man, but even in the things of God a woman is medial - it stands to reason. Even the gigantic dynion gynt and mighty tyrannoi of old time must needs have had mortal women for mothers, if demi-gods or whatever father'd 'em - it stands to reason. For these were of flesh and bone, not illusions men. So here also there is occasion for very flesh, for how should the eternal hypostases be conjoined with a flesh not substantial? [154]

Perhaps advisedly this claim does not carry the full weight of the poet's authority. Yet it seems to contain within it what the poet is moving towards. Without woman, God is powerless; without flesh, God is powerless. Moreover, it is woman who moves God, who gives birth to him and inspires Him, as she inspires men. Woman is the Muse, the virtue of Art, the fount of creation and it is through art that man is man and through Creation that God is God. We have already suggested that the true hero of The Anathemata is the artist; but behind the artist, enabling the artist,is Womankind, fleshy and at the same time the eternal wisdom celebrated in the third Mass of Christmas:

Then back to Mary Major to hear then tell of how that from before all time Minerva is sprung from the head of Jove.[155]

Before leaving "Mabinog's Liturgy", it is perhaps worth noticing that it is the most British of the sections, pervaded by ancient fairy-lore, reminiscences of Romance and Celtic mythology. We tend to associate this oldest culture with chthonic religion and the worship of the Mother Goddess. Certainly, Jones identifies Rhiannon as a Mother Goddess and celebrates her as May:

> This is the night ...
> of ... Rhiannon of the bird-throats,
> was it? Spouse of the lord of Faery? Matrona of the
> Calumniations, seven winters at the horse-block
> telling her own mabinogi of detration?
> Modron our mother?
> Ein mam hawddgar?
> Truly!
> that we must now call MAIR. [156]

He gives this note: "Rhiannon is essentially a mother-figure, in fact the Great Mother, Ragantona. She gave birth to the Great Son; long penance was inflicted on her unjustly and the song of her celestial birds is still proverbial in Wales".

8. Sherthursdays and Venus Day

The consummation of the poem comes in the final section, the celebration of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion which, as we have seen from de la Taille, are essentially the same sacrifice. The sense of culmination and arrival is marked by the fact that the section opens, not with a question, but a statement:

> He that was her son
> is now her lover
> signed with the quest-sign
> at the down-rusher's ford.
> Bough-bearer, harrower
> torrent-drinker, restitutor. [157]

Here at last, Christ comes into his own. Even the Mother becomes secondary, dependent "What will the naiads/ do now, poor things?" [158] He subsumes and comprehends all the types, the vegetation gods and victims, Adonis, Odin, the scythed wheat; the heroes, captains, Roman soldiers;

the questers, Jason, Peredur, Perceval; the paterfamilias, the priest; indirectly, even the artist and the poet. The poem finished at its central point, the indivisible sacrifice of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, which happened at one time and in a particular place, but which was fore-acted and is re-enacted at all times and in all places:

> He does what is done in many places
> what he does other
> he does after the mode
> of what has always been done.
> What did he do other
> recumbent at the garnished supper?
> What did he do yet other
> riding the Axile Tree? [159]

In the preceding pages I have attempted to give an overall idea of the shape of the poem and some of its major concerns. David Jones subtitled this work "fragments of an attempted writing" and indeed forms and ideas are "juxtaposed" in sequences which often appear disjointed rather than linked on a causal or chronological basis. However, this disconnected, collage-like effect which the poem shares with contemporary long poems and indeed painting, particularly Cubism, does more than reflect the artist's despair over a crumbling culture, fragments shored up against ruin. On the contrary, this form results from a cosmological view which sees the whole implicit in every part and every part, no matter how fragmentary, with its place in the whole. In poetry this means that images, words, sounds interact and are interrelated, they reverberate in every direction and every part of the poem modifies every other part of the poem. In the final part of this chapter I intend to examine more closely the operation of the key images and their ramifications which create the structure and fabric of the poem.

It has already been claimed that the central vortex of the poem, the focus of energy is the "Axile Tree", the intersection of the arms of the Cross. I shall now consider at greater length the significance of this key image and its importance as a prime generator of metaphor in the poem.

We have remarked in the first half of the chapter David Jones's interest in the notion of the "sign": man the

sign-maker is man the artist, the artist's task is to lift up "valid signs". The Cross itself is the epitome of the sign; its supreme importance is not itself but what it points to, in fact, it is only as sign that it can be venerated without idolatry:

> Things as signs occasion the kind and degree of honour due to what they signify. The cross, considered purely as a sign, happens to be the specific and unique sign of the God the Son, the Redeemer of the World, and, as such, occasions divine honour, latria. To offer latria to the cross, crucifix or relic of the cross, qua sacred object, image or relic would be idolatrous. But to offer anything less than latria to the cross, qua sign, would be to offer something less than latria to what is signified (namely the Redeemer) which would be insufficient, or rather, an impossibility. For which reason, using the inexact language of everyday speech, we say we pay latria 'to the Wood', because the word 'wood' or 'tree' here signifies the stauros, and the stauros is the singular sign of our Redemption. [160]

As it is the sign of Redemption, in this poem the Cross comes to subsume all signs, just as we have seen that the figure of Christ subsumes all types of the god-hero-victim. Indeed, the Cross becomes the sign of signs, in its two elements, joined but separate, a visual symbol of metaphor. As it is a figure of intersection, a nodal point, it becomes also a sign of the chief abstract ideas of the poem. It signifies the central moment where time and eternity cross, and also the infusion of spirit into matter to create form; thus the Passion and the Incarnation are analogous, or two manifestations of the same truth: God become Man or Man become God. These overarching themes generate or include further analogies, more particular ideas, such as the separateness and identity of male and female, for which the Cross itself can again be a visual sign. In the poem the Cross as sword, lance, battering ram is male; as altar, sacrificial stone, perhaps as flowering branch it is female. Then again, the Cross as sign of the Incarnation is sign of all new forms, all artistic creation, and is itself, as object, a product of art. These abstract ideas, of which the Cross is sign, in their turn inform and generate further "cross-images" in the poem. Images of intersection, foci and nodal points pervade even the detail of the poem. The Cross as sign is seen everywhere:

Crux-mound at the node
gammadion'd castle [161]

The reference is to the hill and fortifications of Troy, recognised as archetype, but even "gammadion'd", a specialised architectural term, refers us to the Cross, for it is a sort of swastika pattern used to fill the base of a painted window. A few lines later Troy is described as "matrix for West-oppida", an image which unites the idea of the Cross as intersection and that of the womb, generating vortex or node. The congress of male and female is conveyed again in images of intersection in "Middle-Sea and Lear-Sea", when the female genius of Rome (Flora?) recalls the city's foundation:

> he first, with his butt-iron, marked the intersection and squared a space - he took his own time on that — and signed me to stand by, then, with a beck of his elbow, turned m' ample front to constant Arcturus, himself aligned to the southward; minding his dressing like the foot-mob-masher he was, - or a haruspex checking his holy stance
> the terrible inaugurator. [162]

The insistence on locus, on the intersection of axes even manifests itself as nautical compass bearings or map instructions:

> Thirty-seven forty-five north
> twenty-three thirty-nine east: [163]
>
> the greyed green wastes that
> they strictly grid
> quadrate and number on the sea-green Quadratkarte
> one eight six one G [164]

These specific indications of specific places in their turn are a sign of, or point us back to, the most significant moment and place of all, which conditions all other space-time events:

> on this hill
> at a time's turn
> not on any hill
> but on this hill. [165]

Thus the Cross as a sign of intersection, of focus, of meeting, of separateness in identity. But in the poem

its type is discovered in many other symbols and material products of our culture and as the significance and function of these are included in all the Cross stands for, so the power of the Cross as central sign extends through our lives and history. In "Keel, Ram, Stauros" we saw the main sub-types of the Cross. The Stauros extends beyond the Christian Cross, for as the tree "vertical'd" it includes Ygdrasil, the world-tree of Scandinavian myth on which the earth depends, the tree on which the God Odin sacrificed himself in a true type of the Christian passion:

> (Nine nights on the windy tree?
> Himself to himself? [166]

As instrument of execution, the Cross becomes all gibbets, all scaffolds, even the most ignoble:

> To be set up?
> pole for the garlands?
> gibbet?
> for the dented spolia?
> gibbet at Laverna's cruxed-way
> for dolorous queans to mourn an Adonis ad vincula? [167]

This reference here is to The Beggar's Opera and the thieves' gallows; we notice again the pervasive image of the Cross in the allusion to the custom of executing criminals at the cross-roads. We see also that this grim instrument of execution may also be the festive maypole, the symbol of fertility set up since pagan times at the summer Calends, celebrated equally by the Celts and Romans. The Cross includes all such raised signs, all totems, and extends as far as the natural tree, the oak venerated by the Druids. As maypole and as living tree, flowering branch, it recalls Christ's aspect as saviour and renewer, as vegetation god, guardian of crops and fertility:

> Erect?
> for the wheat-waves to be high?
> for the sea-wattles to be full?
> for the byres to be warm with breath, for the watering by precedence to be clamorous?
> for the lover's lass? [168]

We saw earlier that as the Cross is the Keel it allows the introduction of the argosy theme, the inclusion of all

sea-voyages and by extension, all quests and trials, including the hunt for the Grail and for the Golden Fleece, the course of Christ's life, the travail of the Crucifixion, the achievement of God's will and the fruitation of the Church as Christ's Mystical Body at the end of the ages. Similaraly, the Cross as Ram brings in the most specifically masculine and aggressive elements of the poem. It recalls the Christ who stormed Hell and can storm men's hearts; it reminds us that the immaculate conception, no matter how spiritual, no matter how willingly accepted by the Virgin, was a dynamic act, a moment of creation; it reminds us that the Crucifixion itself was a bloody, cruel event. Also, it allows David Jones to recall all battles and all those who have endured and died in battle, victims of wars from Trojan times to the carnage of World War I which he himself had experienced, victims who, as they are remembered, recall all those who have died, who have gone before us and bring them into the uniting moment of anamnesis.

In all its manifestations, except perhaps as a growing tree, the Cross is the product of art. Thus, whether it is Keel or Ram, great attention is paid to the details of construction and their correct execution:

> Of selected boles, orneus, assembled and tied
> or of tall beams, coniferous, bolted.
> Thirty paces and a bit from butt to business
> end - well above the maximum last show-done -
> eleven an' a half hands thick where she takes
> her war-head. [169]

This insistence on craft, on the proper exercise of the virtue of art, as we saw, was the main theme of "Redriff"; it extends also to the art of ritual, the proper setting for a feast, be it the Last Supper of later celebrations of Mass:

> In the high cave they prepare
> for guest to be the hostia.
> They set the thwart-boards
> and along:
> Two for the Gospel-makers
> One for the other Son of Thunder

> One for the swordsman, at the right-
> board, after;
> to make him feel afloat. One for the man from
> Kerioth.
> seven for the rest in order.
>
> They besom here and arrange this handy, tidy
> here, and furbish with the green of the year the
> cross-beams and the gleaming board.
>
> They make all shipshape
> for she must be trim
> dressed and gaudeous
> all Bristol-fashion here
> for:
> Who d'you think is Master of her? [170]

We mark in this passage David Jones's own art, his skill in matching sounds and manipulating half-ryhmes, his bitter puns: "hostia" is "victim or sacrifice" but it may also to sound to us as host, and Christ, the guest at the Last Supper and invoked presence at Mass, was and is also the Host of all mankind. Again, we are aware of the skillful inweaving of our own culture through the echoes from "Green grow the Rushes O" or from phrases like "Bristol-fashion". At the same time, the range is extended beyond Judaeo-Christianity by naming the Son of Thunder who reminds us of Thor and Mars and the other Thunder gods, and by the suggestion of world-wide vegetation festivals in "furbish with the green of the year". Also the poet has managed, even at this early stage of the poem, to establish the analogy between the board of the Last Supper and the wood of the ship, thus providing for the nautical and voyage themes of the poem. Incidentally, even in this passage, the figure of the cross is pervasive and prophetic, "thwart-boards", "cross-beams".

In "Mabinog's Liturgy" the details of ritual in the celebration of the Eucharist are similarly specific:

> And on and over the stone
> the spread board-cloths and on this three-fold linen
> the central rectangle of finest linen and on the
> spread-out part of this linen and up-standing calix
> that the drawn-over laundered folds drape white.
> And before the palled cup
> the open dish and on the shallow dish and in the
> wide bowl of the stemmed cup
> the three waiting munera.[171]

The celebration of a ritual is itself a work of art and its efficacy depends on the proper realisation of the artistic form in the material act. Thus the priest is an artist; but conversely, the artist is also a priest, who actually or metaphorically is contributing to God's creation and the achievement of His Will. It has been seen that the description of Gwenhwyfar's Christmas Mass is not simply that, but could easily pass for an account of the appearance of the Holt Grail; "calix", "palled cup","shallow dish". By letting his images be multivalent in this way, Jones does not simply assert that the feast of the Grail is a type of celebration of the Eucharist. Rather, because of his constant reference to mythological and anthropological researches such as those of Frazer or Jessie Weston, we understand that the poet is telling us that the Eucharistic feast itself includes within all that is comprised in the traditions and lore associated with the Grail, be they rites of fertility, renewal of vegetation, restoration of the Waste Land or whatever. In The Anathemata the signs and images never point only one way, and it is for this reason that the poem is not narrowly, or even only Christian, in this way that it avoids didacticism or dogma, and, indeed, from the orthodox point of view, steps over into heresy.

The Cross is the central image of the poem, but the action occurs through the male and female principles which are themselves derived from the central image. That this is true of the male principle can be seen from the previous discussion of the "ram" image, from the identification of the captain with the keel of his ship, from the fact that the Cross is,predominantly, the sign of the hero, the emblem of Christ. But the Cross also generates female images: the stone, the mound, fort, pearl, city, woman, mother, maid, bride witch, earth, water. We could say that the function of the Cross in the peom, as central vortex, was itself feminine, for it is the matrix from which the other constituting images are generated. Though this may be reading into the work what we hope to find, it can, I think, be substantiated by an examination of the evolution of female

imagery within the poem:

> Crux-mound at the node
> gammadion'd castle.
> Within the laughless Megaron
> the Margaron. [172]

As we have noted already, the primary reference is to the fortifications of Troy. We see here how Jones moves from the cross imagery, with its suggestion of woman, "mound", to notions which are much more specifically female. He glosses the second two lines:

> I am associating the rock called Agelastos Petra, 'the laughless rock', at pre-Hellenic Eleusis (where the modelled cult-object in its stone cist within the cleft of rock represented the female generative physiognomy) with the Magarom-type buildings on Troy-rock where Helen was the pearl-to-be-sought within the traversed and echeloned defences of the city. But apart from this association we can accurately describe the hall of Priam as 'laughless' and certainly Helen was a margaron of great price. [173]

If this quotation did nothing else, it would at least illustrate how the notes are an intrinsic part of The Anathemata. Many of the ideas contained in this passage are derived from Jackson Knight's Cumaean Gates which examines the links between ancient burial practices, customs of fortification and city foundation and sybilline or oracular mystery cults associated with caves and rocks; the entire study is derived from a reference to a maze depicted on the Cumaean Gates which occurs in Book VI of The Aeneid. We will see that the associations between these themes is carried over by Jones into his poem. We should notice also that, apart from the scholarly background, Jones reinforces his associations through purely poetic devices such as here, the half-rhyme "Megaron/margaron". By this technique two of the key female images - the rock chamber or hall (i.e. the womb or the mother) and the pearl, the prize, Helen (i.e. the bride) - are made equivalent. Yet even this interpretation is too clear-cut: the division between male and female is always somewhat arbitrary, somewhat temporary. The pearl which here is Helen and elsewhere is the ransomed Church can also be the child in the womb, Mary's Son. Again, the imagery is plurisignative, ambivalent. The

quest works both ways: Christ travails to rescue us, the Church, his bride; we struggle to find Christ, our salvation. Ultimately, the Mystical Body of Christ is the same as the Church triumphant, and differentiation of sex melts away. The same process of separation and fusion is observed with the keel and the ship. The ship is always female, the keel seems to be male but occasionally they are one and the same:

> Recumbent for us
> the dark of her bilges
> for fouled canopy
> the reek of her for an odour of sweetness.
> Sluiced with the seep of us
> knowing the dregs of us.
> Hidden wood
> tree that tabernacles
> the standing trees.
> Lignum for the life of us
> holy keel. [174]

In this passage, the emphasis is on the ship as container and womb; the "tree that tabernacles" is clearly female. Yet the "holy keel" has in the rest of the section been quite definitely male.

We recall from de la Taille and D"Arcy that the Last Supper and the Crucifixion are essentially the same act, and therefore recognise that the festive board in the upper room and the Cross on Calvary are equivalent. This identity is reinforced by the recollection of the many prefiguring sacrifies where what was killed was, in fact, eaten; where the sacrificial stone and spread table were, to all intents and purposes, the same. Jones identifies the Cross with sacrificial altars throughout the ages, altars which may be the scenes of actual bloody immolations or of symbolic rituals, such as that of the Mass. Moreover, as he tells us, the place of the altar should be on the tumulus or burial mound:

'tumulus' because the tumuli, the barrows on our downlands and hill-sites, were essentially burial places and because a Christian altar, by the requirements of Canon Law, and in observance of a use at least as old as the fourth century, should contain relics of the dead. Cf. at the beginning of Mass, the priest kisses the altar, saying ... "by the merits of thy saints whose relics are here ...' and cf.

the Offertory prayer Suscipe sancta trinitas in which the words occur 'and of these here' (et istorum). This prayer is very explicit, it says that oblation is offered to the Trinity, in remembrance of the Trinity, in remembrance of the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension and in honour of the Theotokus, of certain named saints and those whose relics lie under the particular altar at which the Mass is being celebrated, together with all the saints departed. [175]

Now this tumulus is also a cave, a tomb and a womb-again female:

> All the efficacious asylums
> in Wallia vel in Marchia Walliae,
> ogofau of, that cavern for
> Cronos, Owain, Arthur.
> Terra Walliae!
> Buarth Meibion Arthur!
> Enclosure of the Children of Troy! [176]

These are the sleeping lords and heroes who may yet be reborn, who are reborn through anamnesis, "What's under works up" [179] and their various burial mounds, caverns and rings of standing stones are the mothers who shelter them.

The true altar is thus the cross or sacrificial stone and the burial mound or hill on which it is situated, be it Calvary or a Celtic long barrow. But the burial mound itself extends to include all hills, particularly those which are the foundations of cities. The city itself becomes the equivalent of an altar, for it too is founded on the bones of the dead. The archetype of the city, the walled fort on its hills is "nine-stratad Hissarlik", Troy:

> mother of forts
> hill of cries
> small walled-height
> that but 750 paces would circuit
> first revetted of anguish-heights
> matrix for West-oppida
> for West-technic
> for West-saga [178]

But "hill of cries", anguish-heights" informs us that the bill and city of Troy are only another type of the central figure of the Cross on Calvary:

> not on any hill
> but on Ariel hill
> that is as three green hills of Tegeingl
> in one:

the hill of the out-cry
the hill of dereliction
the moel of the mamau
that is all help-heights
the mound of the in-cries. [179]

Of course, in its wider significance the hill is the earth itself, the earth as mother who is personified in the goddesses Demeter and Rhiannon who appear in the poem. But even when the female achieves this greatest importance she remains temporal, material, "this unabiding rock", [180] dependent on the eternal spirit, the power of God "by whom all oreogenesis is": [181]

Ante colles he is and
before the fleeting hills
in changing order stood. [182]

Yet we should notice that as the female principle is Sophia, God's eternal wisdom, and as it is the form of the Incarnation which is outside all time, so the mother herself, at least as Platonic idea, is eternal. Jones echoes the tortuous interdependence of male and female, bride and bridegroom, mother and son, in his own tortous syntax:

> He by whom she is to whom by a wise allegory they make apply, ante colles ego parturiebar: she that laughs last.
> Sophia's child that calls him master
> he her groom that is his mother. [183]

As the female is the sheltering earth so also she is protective water, the amniotic fluid in the womb, "her federal waters ark'd him", [184] and thus all fountains, rivers, oceans, personified in the naiads and the mermaids, in the sirens and in the goddesses of seamen like Aphrodite and Athene.

But, more specifically, the female principle is discovered not only in the hill but in the city founded on the hill, particularly as that city is a site, an enclosure capable of protecting, in danger of being taken. Thus Troy, Rome and London are all female, all cities of living communities founded on communities of the dead. The city becomes the type of all communities, of the ship's crew,

the army camp or regiment and most importantly of all, it is the community of the Church, the City of God on earth. Every secular city is a type of the holy city, as clearly secular Rome and the Roman ideal are for David Jones the type, albeit very imperfect, of the ideal of the Roman Catholic Church, the community of Christ on earth working towards the completion of his Mystical Body.

So the female principle is discovered in the images of earth and water, rocks, caves, stones, in the burial mound, the fortress and the city. Let us consider some of the personifications of the female principle, the women, witches, nymphs and goddesses who appear in the poem.

By separating his concept of womankind into all the different women of the poem, from the Virgin Mary to Helen to the Cockney Lady of the Pool to the goddesses Aphrodite, Athene and Demeter, Diana and Persephone, Scandinavian Freya and Celtic Brigid, to the female saints and to the less respectable semi-divine beings such as mermaids and sirens, witches and sibyls, David Jones succeeds in establishing Woman as a universal and many-sided force. In a sense, all his women are one woman, or are the type of the Virgin Mary, mother and bride. But by ranging so widely he avoids the dangers of Mariolatry, and indeed makes of Mary something much more fundamental and universal than she is in Catholic theology, though not perhaps than she is in the hearts of men or in the traditions of Christian literature.

Mary is the pattern of womankind whom all the other female persons in the poem figure or are related to:

> Now sisters! What said our pious father, Maro,
> Pentref Andes, son of Maia, queen of Mantua, in
> Gallia Transpadana.
> There's always a Mari in it, I warrant you!

Yet different sections of the poem emphasise different aspects of woman and have different "heroines". In the first section which recalls oreogenesis, mountain-building, the very formation of the planet, the chthonic theme is

important and the poet emphasises the sheltering female hills, the burial mounds, the tumps:

> West horse-hills?
> Volcae-remnants' crag-carneddau,
> Moel of the Mothers?
> the many colles Arthuri? [186]

the folowing rivers:

> But had they as yet morained
> where holy Deva's entry is?
> Or pebbled his mere, where
> still the Parthenos
> she makes her devious exit? [187]

We notice here the play on Deva, the Latin name for the River Dee. The word sounds as "diva", goddess, and then modulates to "devious", another aspect of woman and at the same time a reference to a change in the river's course which occurred at the end of the last Ice Age. The earth herself is the presiding female force in this part:

> When is Tellus
> to give her dear fosterling
> her adaptable, rational, elect
> and plucked-out otherling
> a reasonable chance? [188]

The goddess of this period is the archaic fertility symbol, the Willendorf Venus:

> Chthonic? why yes
> but mother of us.
> Then it is these abundant ubera, here,
> under the species of worked lime-rock, that
> gave suck to the Lord? She that they already
> venerate (what other could they?)
> her we declare? [189]

Woman in this section, therefore, appears in her primordial aspect. In "Middle-Sea and Lear-Sea" the emphasis is on the voyage, on male action and the most important female figures are those associated with the sea. These figures take the form of female statues, korai and parthenai of archaic and classical Greek art, as well as their Roman imitations. The goddess is a presiding guardian over a city or an island, often

realised in the form of an Aphrodite or an Athene placed on a promontory, sending out her sailors and traders and watching over them:

> Virgo Potens
> her alerted armament
> land-mark for sea-course
> Polias and star of it
> but Tritogenian.
> As a sea-mark then
> for the navigating officers. [190]

At a less exalted level, this female the sailors look to is their sweetheart in every port. David Jones unites the two levels by naming his mariners' girls after divine and sibylline figures:

> you shall have y'r warm-dugged Themis
> and you, white Phoebe's lune
> ... and laughless little Telphousa [191]

> Themis, pray.
> Phoebe, Telphousa
> pray.
> Agalastos Petra
> cleft for us! [192]

A note on p.104 glosses these names:

> These names of the three sweethearts of the matelots each connote various aspects of femaleness: the earth, the seasons, the fates, the sibylline art, the menstrual cycle, the moon, so the tides, the huntress, the mother. Telphousa in particular has affinities with Delphi and so with Petra Agelastos. [193]

The image of Petra Agelastos, the centre of Eleusinian mysteries, whose cleft is "representative of the female generative physiognomy" echoes the Rock of St. Peter and this Christian theme is reinforced by the further suggestion of the hymn "Rock of Ages". This analogy or metaphor, this fusion of two different strands or traditions is effected by the poetic devices of word-play and sound, yet we accept them as valid, as a perception of a new coherence.

Eb Bradshaw, the poet's grandfather and hero of "Redriff", as we have already seen, has an almost hermaphroditic role. As craftsman and artist he is male, but

as stay-at-home, as a voice of the City he seems to have much more of the passive role of the female and indeed his Cockney speech links him closely to the garrulous heroine of the following section, the eponymous Lady of the Pool. She is, first of all, every sailor's sweetheart: she is a woman of the people, in some ways ignorant, semi-illiterate, yet possessed of folk-wisdom made up of tradition and the stories of her sea-going lovers. In a way, she personifies the culture itself, not merely the literary culture but the entire hodge-podge of myth, history, pseudo-history and fold-belief through which a people creates an identity for itself. We might choose to see her as a figure of the poet, the preserver and creator of the culture butthis, I think, would be mistaken. She is rather the poet's inspiration or Muse, and, at the same time, the matter of his poetry. We think we hear the Lady's voice in this section, but she speaks always within the context of the poem which as a whole is the invention and narration of the poet.

This Lady is very much a fleshy creature, a London wench; but she has affinities with other supernatural and more exalted beings, and indeed herself identifies with the goddesses and heroines of history, Iphigenia, Helen, Flora the spirit of Rome, and above all, with Mary whose churches she recites and whose patronage she invokes. It is the Lady who voices the idea that the concept of Mary is, for men, a conflation of their ides of mother, mistress and muse:

> You see, Master, I were not honoured of a' aurioled clerk to no purpose, nor <u>but</u> fleshly ... and 'twere he that did name me when and as he would favour me, after the name of her dower; and in the secret garth and inmost bailey of him, where such unlike conjoinings are, he did meddle me with his Bountiful Mother and with that <u>other</u>, that nourished him bodily: these <u>too</u> were England - if with differences. [194]

Jones also uses the Lady to introduce the element of mystery and terror which is part of his concept of woman.

No matter how fleshly, how human, there is always a lingering suspicion of the alien, or other-ness about the female. Thus she is transformed into a siren, a mermaid, a creature not wholly human, not completely subject to the laws which govern man. The section reveals the Lady's latent power and when she dismisses her captain her threatened curse carried with it all the force of ancient witchcraft and matriarchal tradition:

> by Gogmagog!
> and the thirty-two fornicating daughters of the Island o' Britain, may the Loathly Worm have you, before you've so much as made the Nore on a favourable tide.[195]

In "Mabinog's Liturgy" woman again comes into her own, this time in the person of Gwenhwyfar, wife of Arthur. Although she is portrayed as of Roman-British or Roman-Welsh descent and is an aristocrat she is very similar to the Lady of the Pool. Both characters are an attempt to realise the idea of woman in a British context, and, being much more the poet's own creation than the goddesses and heroines of mythology or even the overarching figure of Mary herself, they are so much the more rounded and complete. Gwenhwyfar is portrayed as majestic and vain, beautiful but flawed. Jones describes her form and her dress almost in terms of ritual; her clothes are similar to those adopted by the priesthood and her very shape appears statuesque, larger than life:

> And from where over-gown and under-gown and <u>linea</u> draped the clavicled torus of it, her neck-shaft of full entasis, as though of Parian that never ages, still as a megalith, and as numinous:

Jones made several paintings of Guinevere which are among his most impressive works. In them she appears as a huge, very beautiful but rather threatening figure, daunting in her female sexuality and otherness. For him, she seems to have symbolised his concept of woman more completely even than Mary, from whom the aspect of danger or even evil, must be absent.

The supernatural element is brought out in the second part of the section when the poem moves out of doors and a voice speaks, ostensibly the voice of a witch, but very close to that of the Lady of the Pool, though without her Cockney accent. The Arthurian link is also there, for the witches belong to the company of Morgan-le-Fay, Arthur's sister, and we can imagine that even Gwenhwyfar out of doors and in less regal circumstances might have some knowledge of the magic arts. In allowing his witches power and the traditions of faery and magic, Jones is paying tribute to the native pre-Christian inheritance of the Island. But by making his witches acknowledge the power of Mary and of Christ he assimilates the pagan tradition to that of Christianity and of Rome and brings together the separate strands that make up his own inheritance:

> Wherefore we malkins three
> for all our sisters
> of Anglia et Walliae and of Albany
> our un-witched *aves* pay
> if only on this, HER NIGHT OF ALL.
> Unto the bairn, as three clerks inclining
> when they confess themselves before his Stone
> at the Introit-time.
> Kneel sisters!
> Greymalkin! Kneel. [197]

In the final section, the power of woman yields to that of Christ and her dependence on him is made evident:

> What will the naiads
> do now, poor things:
> the lady of the ffynnon
> *Es Sitt* that moves the *birket*, fays *del lac*, the donnas of the lyn, the triad-*matres*, the barley-tressed *mamau* and the grey-eyed *nymphae* at the dry ffynhonnau whose *silvae*-office is to sing:
>
> UNUS HOMO NOBIS
> (PER AQUAM)
> RESTITUIS REM. [198]

This passage shows us yet again how closely the female principle is associated with natural things, with wood, water and earth. The male principle, on the other hand, is much more anthropomorphic in its manifestations,

and although the hero is associated with vegetation rites and renewal of crops, even appearing in one type of the victim as John Barleycorn,[199] he is not shown as natural object but either as a product of human culture or as a personification, an active figure with human or divine attributes. The three main types of this hero are, as we have seen, the poet-artist, the priest and the god-hero, types which generate further sub-types and allow the in-weaving of the poet's mythological, anthropological, historical and religious themes.

By looking at the different persons of the male protagonist and the ways in which their roles merge or overlap, we shall discover more about the myth of the poem, the central idea which is conveyed through the events enacted and re-enacted in the work. Each male figure plays his own part, but the plot or myth of that role is re-enacted by the others; so Adonis, Attis and John Barleycorn are all types of Christ. In the same way, Jason, Brute, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Viking sea-captains repeat the theme of the voyage and as they do so again preficure the life and passion of Christ. The questing knight is very similar to the voyaging sea-captain, though where the idea of captain emphasises the case for ship and crew, that of the questor brings out the notion of the mission and the prize. And as we have learned from the works of Frazer and Weston the mission of the questing knight is closely linked to the myths of the god-victims, Attis and Adonis, in that both are traced back to vegetation rituals and ceremonies intended to bring about the renewal of fertility and of crops. These principal types of the god-hero are repeated again in individuals: in Hector, the victim outside Troy:

> Since Troy fired
> since they dragged him
> widdershins
> without the wall.
> When they regarded him:
> his beauties made squalid, his combed gilt
> a matted mop
> his bruised feet thonged
> under his own wall. [200]

in Nelson, captain and victim - "him whom Nike did bear"; in Bran, legendary god-hero of the Mabinogion. Such are the figures of the god-hero; captain, quester and victim. Each is reducible to the other and each is comprehended by the archetypal figure of Christ, yet already an ambiguity appears. Christ is the Redeemer and the Victim, the quester and the maimed King; as Victim, Christ is the passive sufferer, his immolation and the renewal of his resurrection must be completed or made efficacious by another, in the Grail legends by Perceval or Peredur, the quester. In the Christian myth the active part is played by the priest, of whom Christ is again the archetype:

> In the prepared high-room
> he implements inside time and late in time under forms in-
> delibly marked by locale and incidence, deliberations made
> out of time; before all ovogenesis [illegible]

According to de la Taille and D'Arcy, Christ himself is the first celebrant of the Mass, a "priest of the order of Melchisedek", in the prospective ritual of the Last Supper. He himself makes his own sacrifice efficacious and it is the Last Supper as much as the Crucifixion which is re-enacted in the celebration of the Eucharist. The figure of the priest is central to the poem; he is disclosed in the first scene:

> We already and first of all discern him making this thing other. His groping syntax, if we attend, already shapes:
> ADSCRIPTAM? RATAM? RATIONABILEM ... and by pre-application and for them, under modes and patterns altogether theirs, the holy and venerable hands lift up an efficacious sign. [202]

He appears again and again and need not necessarily be Christian; he may be a pontifex of Rome, a priest of Mithras, a member of the Arval Brethren or a British Druid. He may be a cult-man, a magician, a sooth-sayer or haruspex, and as he is seen further back in time and meddles more with the supernatural, he may merge with the semi-divine figures of Celtic lore, Ludd, Merlin and Manawydan.

The priest's role is to make the sacrifice of the Mass efficacious by re-enacting the sacrifice of Christ and one aspect of his assumption of the divine nature in his power to create, make other, to bring about through the proper celebration of the ritual the transformation of the elements of bread and wine, really or symbolically, into the blood and body of Christ. But it is just this ability to make other, to raise up valid signs which Jones says is characteristic of the artist, and when he goes back into pre-Christian and pre-historic times, he finds that artist and priest are one:

> Did the fathers of those
> who forefathered them
> (if by genital or ideate begetting)
> set apart, make other, oblate?
>
> By the uteral marks
> that make the covering stone an artefact.
> By the penile ivory
> and by the viatic meats
> Dona ei requiem. [204]

Jones extends the priesthood to include all men who are artists and, since he holds that all men are, if they are fully men, also artists, he thus allows that all men are, or may be priests. In other words, all men, whether they come before or after Christ, as they are makers, participate in making their own redemption efficacious and collaborate in God's creation. Christ's Church, his Mystical Body, cannot be completed except through the actions of the artist-priest, the successive acts of anamnesis made by the poet. Priest, artist and god are one, and in this poem the emphasis is placed on the correct exercise of the virtue of art, for only through efficacious art can the will of God be achieved and Man's divinity reattained in the God-head. In the penultimate lines of the poem when all nations are brought together in Christ's double sacrifice, the correct forms and rules of the ritual are stressed by the vocabulary and deliberate movement of the verse:

On Ariel Hill, on Sion tumulus
on Uru Mound, in Salem cenacle
in the white Beth-El
according to the disciplina
of these peculiar people
in accord with the intentions
of all peoples
and kindreds
et gentium, cenhedloedd, und Völker
that dance
by garnished Baum
or anointed stone.
... ...
Here, in this high place
into both hands
he takes the stemmed dish
as in many places
by this poured and that held up
wherever their directing glosses read:
Here he takes the victim. [205]

So the images and themes of the poem are drawn together, tree and stone, Celt, Roman and Saxon, in the celebration of the archetypal ritual. Jones says in a letter to Saunders Lewis:

The action of the Mass was meant to be the central theme of the work for as you once said to me: "The Mass makes sense of everything". [206]

Certainly, the Mass and the Cross, which is its symbol, do make sense of everything, insofar as they themselves are signs. The action of the Mass indicates that Man is divine and that he effects his own redemption through his art. Christ, as he was incarnate and actually suffered on earth, was only a type, or manifestation, albeit the supreme one, of this eternal truth. The Mass is the archetype of the work of art, and every work of art, including The Anathemata, is in some sense, a celebration of the Mass. In this poem David Jones puts on the mantle of the bard and the vestments of the priest and in so doing celebrates his own and our divinity. Through the act of anamnesis, in the "actual event", the intersection of time and eternity is made present and real. In the celebration of the Eucharist mind and matter come together and dualism is transcended. At the centre of that event, at the centre of the community which he unites and creates is the figure of the poet, Man as God.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1 The only example I have been able to discover is Ezra Pound's "Ts'ai Chi'h":

> The petals fall in the fountain,
> the orange-coloured rose-leaves,
> Their ochre clings to the stone.

From Des Imagistes, included in Imagist Poetry edited by Peter Jones, p.95.

2 Letter to The Listener, 2nd July, 1953. Reprinted in Epoch and Artist by David Jones (London, 1959). p.278

3 T.S. Eliot in "A Note of Introduction" to In Parenthesis by David Jones (London, 1963 edition) p.viii.

4 Jeremy Hooker, David Jones: An Exploratory Study (London, 1975) pp.50-51.

5 The Mystery of Faith and Human Opinion Contrasted and Defined translated by J.B. Schimpf (London, 1930). This includes a summary of the original Latin thesis.

6 See Rene Hague on Jones and Spengler. Commentary p.18 and passim.

7 Barbara Celarent, p.81.

8 Barbara Celarent, p.34.

9 From the Preface to the second edition of Maritain's Philosophie Bergsonienne quoted by Raissa Maritain in We Have Been Friends Together translated by Julie Kernan. (New York, 1943) p.199-200.

10 Vorticism reprinted in Ezra Pound, Penguin Critical Anthology, p.53.

11 Terms used to indicate correspondances in poetry used respectively by Hugh Kenner (including the Cantos) and Robert Duncan.

12 F.C. Coppleston, Aquinas (Harmondsworth, 1955) p.140.

13 Art and Scholasticism, p.30.

14 Art and Scholasticism, pp.32-33.

15 "Art and Sacrament" in Epoch and Artist, p.172.

16 "Art and Sacrament" p.172.

17 Preface to The Anathemata, p.23.

18 Preface to The Anathemata, p.23.

19 Barbara Celarent, p.51.

20 Barbara Celarent, p.53.

21 Wyndham Lewis, see Chapter Two, n.49.

22 Barbara Celarent, p.59.

23 Art and Scholasticism, p.33.

24 "Brilliance of form", splendor formae - integrity, harmony, clarity (integritas, consonantia, claritas). These terms will be familiar from the exposition of Stephen Daedalus in James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Joyce was an artist much admired by Jones, both for his innovations and for his exploitation and recreation of his cultural and religious inheritance.

25 Art and Scholasticism, pp.19-20.

26 Barbara Celarent, p.60.

27 Art and Scholasticism, pp.19-20.

28 The Anathemata, Preface, pp.23-24.

29 The Anathemata, pp.9, 10, 11.

30 Art and Scholasticism, p.13.

31 Art and Scholasticism, p.11.

32 T.S. Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in The Sacred Wood (London, 1972 edition) p.56.

33 Eliot, p.59.

34 Eliot, p.58.

35 "Autobiographical Talk" in Epoch and Artist, p.29.

36 "Past and Present" in Epoch and Artist, p.140.

37 The Mystery of the Faith, p.11.

38 The Mystery of the Faith, p.13.

39 See Chapter Two.

40 Art and Scholasticism, p.62.

41 Thomas Gilby, Poetic Experience (London,) p.105.

42 "Art and Sacrament" in Epoch and Artist, p.174.

43 "Autobiographical Talk" in Epoch and Artist, p.3.

44 "Art and Sacrament" in Epoch and Artist, p.175.

45 Art and Scholasticism, p.96.

46 Art, p.48.

47 Art, p.49.

48 "James Joyce's Dublin" in Epoch and Artist, p.306.

49 "Eric Gill as Sculptor" in Epoch and Artist, p.293.

50 Reproduced in the catalogue of David Jones Exhibition (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1954).

51 Agenda, Vol.5, Nos.1-3.

52 The Anathemata, p.205.

53 See D'Arcy, The Mass and the Redemption, p.64, footnote:

"The manner after which Christ is the offerer in the Mass will, I hope, by now be apparent. The whole of this book may be said to be an explanation of the relation of Christ's priesthood to our priesthood. Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience and clarity, a short summary may be added here. According to the theory defended in the text every Mass is, in one sense, a new sacrifice, but this quality of "new" does not come from a new real immolation, but from a "new" offering of a perennial victim. This "new" offering is made by the Church. I say "new" but here further qualifications are necessary. The church does not make a "new" offering in the sense that it can make an offering independent of that of Christ. Not only is the Victim the same, but the Church is Christ continuing in his Mystical Body. All the virtue of that Body comes from Christ, its Head. Christ, therefore, can be said to be the principal offerer on the Mass, in that the members are offering by virtue of the Head; and the priest-hood of the Church is, so to speak, enveloped by or a participation of the priesthood of Christ. The priest, then, offers by virtue of Christ; he consecrates, as St. Paschasius says, in sacerditio ipso Christi. "The part which Christ's offering has, is that of the principal and universal cause in its own order; our part is that of a subordinate and particular cause. And so Christ offers through our offering without himself making any new offering in his own person. From the Church comes all that is new; from Christ, all the virtue and power" (Mysterium Fidei, p.296)".

54 "Welsh Poetry" in Epoch and Artist, p.58.

55 "Art and Sacrament" in Epoch and Artist, p.155.

56 "Art and Sacrament" in Epoch and Artist, p.159.

57 Art and Scholasticism, footnote, p.46.

58 The Anathemata, p.28.

59 "Art and Sacrament" in Epoch and Artist", p.148.

60 "Art and Sacrament", p.166, quoting Aquinas.

61 "Art and SacramentP p.153.

62 See Art, especially Chapters IV and V.

63 Art and Scholasticism, p.77.

64 The Sleeping Lord (London, 1974) p.9.

65 "Art and Sacrament", p.178.

66 The Anathemata, p.19.

67 "Art and Sacrament" p.157.

68 "Art and Democracy" in Epoch and Artist, p.88.

69 Art p.136

70 Art, p.44.

71 Art and Scholasticism, p.63.

72 The Mass and the Redemption, p.xi.

73 The Mass and the Redemption, p.xvi.

74 The Mass and the Redemption, p.8.

75 The Mass and the Redemption, pp.111-112.

76 The Mass and the Redemption, p.115.

77 Art and Scholasticism, p.132.

78 The Anathemata, p.21.

79 Anatomy of Criticism, p.124.

80 The Anathemata, p.59.

81 The Anathemata, p.60.

82 [illegible]. Letters to William Hayward, see below, p.37

83 Letters to William Hayward edited by Colin Wilcockson (London, 1979) pp.39-40.

84 Anath. p.124.

85 Anath. p.97.

86 See Cumaean Gates and Virgil's Troy.

87 Anath, p.201.

88 Anath, p.213.

89 Anath, p.65.

90 Anath, p.84.

91 Anath, p.91.

92 Anath, p.92.

93 Anath, p.92.

94 Anath, p.100 See also footnote.

95 Anath, p.110.

96 Anath, p.114.

97 Anath, p.115.

98 Anath, p.118.

99 Anath, pp.118-119.

100 Anath, p.121.

101 Commentary, p.155.

102 Anath, p.124.

103 The Mabinogion translated by Gwen Jones and Thomas Jones. (London, 1974) p.40.

104 Mabinogion, p.34.

105 Cumaean Gates (Oxford, 1936) Chapter V and VI.

[106] Unless we count the brief appearance of Flora or Roma in "Middle-Sea and Lear-Sea". p.87.

[107] Anath, p.216.

[108] "The poets themselves often fought before composing accounts of battle and old Welsh Law accorded a special reward to the poet who took part in the raid he celebrated. Aneirin may well have been the sole survivor of the commando raid on Catterick, and Taliesin and Myredin, for I feel sure Myradin must have existed, were warriers as well as poets". Gwyn Williams, Introduction to Welsh Poems, (London, 1973) p.10.

[109] Anath, p.135 and footnote.

[110] Anath, pp.143-144.

[111] Anath, p.145.

[112] Anath, footnote p.234:"'Before the hills was I brought forth', Pro.VIII, 25, said of Wisdom and applied to the Liturgy to the Mother fo God who represents Wisdom. She was quickened by the Spirit and the bringer-forth of the Logos-made-Flesh. Or to use a mythologer's terms, she is both bride and mother of the cult-hero". See also footnote on p.221.

[113] Anath, p.129.

[114] Anath, p.129.

[115] Commentary, p.169.

[116] Anath, p.133.

[117] Anath, p.135.

[118] Commentary, p.171.

[119] Anath, p.155.

[110] Anath, p.134.

[111] Anath, p.144.

[112] Anath, p.147.

[113] Anath, p.149.

[114] Anath, p.152-153.

[115] Commentary, p.169

[116] Anath, p.133.

[117] Anath, p.135.

[118] Commentary, p.171.

[119] Anath, p.155.

[120] Anath, p.134.

[121] Anath, p.144.

[122] Anath, p.147.

[123] Anath, p.149.

124 Anath, pp.152-153.

125 Anath, p.158.

126 Anath, p.151.

127 Anath, p.151.

128 Anath, p.129.

129 Anath, pp.42-43.

130 Anath, p.160.

131 Anath, p.163.

132 Anath, p.166.

133 Anath, p.168.

134 Anath, p.170.

135 Anath, p.164.

136 Anath, p.170.

137 Anath, p.165.

138 Anath, p.171.

139 Anath, p.173.

140 Anath, p.173.

141 Anath, p.174.

142 Anath, p.177.

143 Anath, p.177.

144 Anath, p.178.

145 Anath, p.179.

146 Anath. Note p.131. See also Mabinigion "The Dream of Macsen Wledig".

147 Anath, p.134.

148 Anath, p.182.

149 Anath, p.182.

150 Anath, p.189.

151 Anath, p.194.

152 Anath, p.195.

153 Anath, p.199.

154 Anath, pp.213-214.

155 Anath, p.221.

156 Anath, p.217.

157 Anath, p.224.

158 Anath, p.237.

159 Anath, p.243.

160 Anath, footnote, p.165.

161 Anath, p.56.
162 Anath, p.87.
163 Anath, p.95.
164 Anath, p.115.
165 Anath, p.53.
166 Anath, p.225.
167 Anath, pp.175-176.
168 Anath, p.178.
169 Anath, p.177.
170 Anath, pp.52-53.
171 Anath, p.203.
172 Anath, p.56.
173 Anath, p.56.
174 Anath, p.180.
175 Anath, p.51.
176 Anath, p.55.
177 Anath, p.164.
178 Anath, pp.56-57.
179 Anath, p.233.
180 Anath, p.55.
181 Anath, p.233.
182 Anath, p.233.
183 Anath, p.235.
184 Anath, p.235.
185 Anath, p.213.
186 Anath, p.55.
187 Anath, p.67.
188 Anath, p.64.
189 Anath, p.60.
190 Anath, p.92.
191 Anath, p.102.
192 Anath, p.104.
193 Anath, p.104.
194 Anath, p.144.
195 Anath, p.168.
196 Anath, p.198.
197 Anath, p.215.
198 Anath, pp.237-238.

199 Anath, pp.227-228.

200 Anath, p.84.

201 Anath, p.53.

202 Anath, p.49.

203 Anath, p.64.

204 Anath, p.64-65

205 Anath, pp.241-242.

206 Letter to Saunders Lewis, April, 1971. Published in Agenda, Autumn-Winter 1973/1974.

CHAPTER FOUR

HUGH MACDIARMID AND IN MEMORIAM JAMES JOYCE

There can be few more striking contrasts than that between the work of David Jones the Anglo-Welsh Catholic, and the poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid, Scottish Nationalist, Marxist and self-proclaimed modernist. Yet both poets have sought in the post-Imagist era to write the long poem which makes use of myth and history, of tradition and contemporary realities, the sort of poem which, because of its awareness of community, of its political or social function, might be accounted a twentieth century epic. In Memoriam James Joyce has been chosen for study because, like The Anathemata, it possesses these features and is at the same time distinctly a modernist poem, to be understood in the light of the Imagist inheritance.

Indeed, MacDiarmid's poem could be said to fulfill the main tenets of Imagist doctrine by carrying them to extremes:

(i) "Direct treatment of the thing - whether subjective or objective".

In In Memoriam James Joyce the "thing" is the word and where words naming "things" (i.e. existing outside language and the poem) are introduced it is their "wordliness" rather than the "thingliness" which is more important. In the Author's Note to Lucky Poet, written in 1941, MacDiarmid declares:

> Because of a profound interest in the actual structure of language, like Mallarmés, like Mallarmé, I have always believed in the possibility of "une poésie qui fut comme déduite de l'ensemble des propriétés et des caractères du langage" - the act of poetry being the reverse of what it is usually thought to be; not an idea gradually shaping itself in words, but deriving entirely from words.[1]

Since the subject of the work and its medium are the same, i.e. language, the treatment could hardly be more direct or intimate, for subject and object are fused in the process of the poem as it is realized.

(ii) "Use no word which does not contribute to presentation".

For MacDiarmid, whose subject is language, every word contributes to presentation. On his terms, if he fails it is not through an excess of verbosity, but because he cannot include all words and locutions that man ever has or ever could utter.

(iii) "Compose in the sequence of the musical phrase - not in the sequence of the metronome".

MacDiarmid obeys this injunction too, but again he goes to the extreme, following the example of modern musicians in realizing that the musical phrase can include silences, series of thumps on the lid of the piano and even the disparaged "sequence of the metronome". He chooses the

> perhaps 'primrose path'
> To the dodecaphonic bonfire.[2]

Thus we see that MacDiarmid shares the general modernist preoccupation with the medium itself, with language, recognizing that the significance of words lies as much in the way they are used, "how they say", as in the matter, conventional meaning, content, or "what they say". David Jones stressed the autonomy of the literary work as an art object made out of words and his philological and etymological interests were apparent. MacDiarmid carries this concern a stage further; language itself becomes the subject of the poem, words and arrangements of words the images. The universe of the poem is truly "The World of Words" (the title of the second section) and it could be argued that the central, informing image or, if we prefer, vortex, is the Word or Logos itself in the process of its own creation. This process is the structural principle or life force of the poem; its form is its own dynamic development:

> So long as the growth-mechanism persists
> It must of itself result in changes of form.[3]

> The <u>doing</u> is the will.
> The <u>deed</u> once accomplished is the exact definition of the will.[4]

This again is in line with the Imagists for they placed great emphasis on the poem having its own internal, individual and organic structure, a form which was stricter, though often less obvious, than the imposed external forms of conventional verse. However, since MacDiarmid's poem is evolving, as it seeks to attain or realize itself as the Logos, it is necessarily incomplete and therefore its form may not be evident to our understanding which is necessarily limited by our physical and temporal natures. MacDiarmid, as a man, is of course as mortal as the rest of us (though we might note that MacDiarmid as a man did not exist, since he is a fictional identity or penname for Christopher Murray Grieve), but working as a poet in the world of language, cooperating in, contributing to the total poem, he transcends temporality. Such is the rationale, but nevertheless, in many of his long works, MacDiarmid has incurred the charges of formlessness, chaos and lack of control. These are similar to the charges levelled against the Cantos, and it may be that in either case they should be sustained. But perhaps MacDiarmid differs from Pound in that though he knowingly risks such charges he does not feel bound to answer them since he is, as it were, playing to different rules.

As in the case of Walt Whitman, arrogant egotism masks the true democratic or communistic ideal where everything by virtue of its existence has the right to exist, contributes to the totality and must be included in the poem. We remember Blake, that earlier revolutionary, and his dictum "Everything that lives is holy" and compare MacDiarmid's own "professional motto", taken from Marcus Aurelius:

> How all things upon earth are pesle mesle; and how miraculously things contrary one to another, concurre to the beautie and perfection of this Universe.[5]

We understand how, for the most passionately rebellious and iconoclastic poets, in one sense everything that is, is right. Pound, on the other hand, does seem to operate on the same terms as his critics, in that he appears to be seeking a form ordering, or interpretation of the world.

However, this is based on his own arbitrary and exclusive selection from world history and culture. In relying thus on his "ego-beak"[6] he sets himself an attainable though unattained target. But at the same time he reveals himself as truly arrogant and elitist so that we understand how his political and ideological beliefs may be related to his poetic practice. MacDiarmid escapes this assertion of the self, by engaging in a task which cannot be achieved at the personal level; his work and the persona which the world creates become part of the Total Poem. Again, political ideology and poetic practice are seen to be interdependent, an interdependence which will become clear in the discussion of MacDiarmid's political involvement as a Nationalist and a Communist.

By focussing on language itself MacDiarmid finds room in his poem not only for what we might normally think of as images, those physical or sensual images whose primary and immediate appeal is perhaps sub- or pre- conceptual, but also for abstractions, concepts and arguments. These intellectual operations appear in the poem as ratiocinative content, yet often the thread of the poem's argument becomes tantalizingly elusive. We should understand that the concepts and arguments themselves appear as images and attack our apprehension in the same way as the more physical images.

MacDiarmid employs something akin to the ideogrammatic method by juxtaposing a number of concepts or arguments which are obliquely related in such a way that a key figure, pattern or myth is established without necessarily ever being explicitly stated. He refers to his poetry as "tessellation" and "Mosaic"; it is a poetry at once of ideas and facts in which fact and idea become equal in value; all must be included in the poem because all exist, ideas are as real as physical things. Moreover, a particular fact or idea very often appears in the poem not for the sake of its content or orthodox meaning, but because it is emblematic of some more general concept or even of facts or ideas in general. The long dissertation from

Ernest George White's "Sinus Tone Production"[7] is introduced not simply as an example of "suppressio veri", though that is its pretext, but also as a further aspect of the poet's main theme in that it is concerned with the production and articulation of language; moreover, it is an image of knowledge, of the impossible erudition which should be possessed by the ideal poet, and can only be possessed by the ideal poet, and can only be possessed by the projected Major Man who is totally conscious and totally articulate, the synthesis towards which the whole of creation is driving. Finally, the passage is included simply as itself, as a piece of information with a value which lies not in its emblematic or representative qualities, but in its particularity, the unique contribution it makes to the whole. In the same way, one page in any book or poem by MacDiarmid may present an argument or idea whose exact converse appears slightly further on. Of course, MacDiarmid believes in the synthesis which will comprehend all contradictions, every thesis and antithesis. He would "aye be whaur extremes meet" he says, declaring himself the poet of antinomies. But at the same time, all ideas and all arguments capture some aspect of reality, have meaning, and as products of the human mind merit inclusion in the poem. They are part of the achievement of language.

MacDiarmid does not seek a world of words as an escape from the real world. On the contrary, it is only because he believes that the process of language and particularly the highly self-conscious process of poetry are part of the process of the total life force, and indeed the highest part, that he sets himself this enormous task. Almost from the outset of his career he sought the bardic role, as a role which he interpreted as a political activity: "My ambition was to be the creator of a new people, a real bard who sang things till they 'became', yet as an individual the incarnation of an immemorial culture".[8] Here MacDiarmid suggests that the poet as the voice of his people

not only restores for them the meaning and significance of their past, or simply interprets their present but also through his songs and poems, through the renewal of language, creates new meaning which may be physically realized. In other words, he furthers the future of his people, heightens consciousness and hastens the progress towards the New Man, which is also, somehow, the achievement of World Communism. In Lucky Poet he quotes with approval from a review of his own work:

> For,...what matters in poetry is neither meaning nor vocabulary, but the fusion of both in utterance that is itself an experience. Such utterance MacDiarmid has, both in English and in Scots, in phrases and in imagery. His metaphors, like Rilke's, become "autonomous imaginative realities." He is in fact a makar, creating new life...[9]

This quotation supports the suggestion that MacDiarmid believes that language is really effective in the affairs of men, that he rejects the dichotomy between art and life, between the poet and the man of action, a doctrine which is entailed by the philosophies of Bergson and Hulme.

Although MacDiarmid accepted Bergson's notion of an élan vital, he rejected his anti-intellectualism:

> I find [immediate experience] to be a flux or 'stream of consciousness', whose constant basis is sensation. Distinction, variety, individuality, and definiteness are all the work of thought, and not given to immediate experience as such. So far, I go along with Bergson - and also with Kant. The clearly defined 'perceptual object' which we see, transcends the vague mass of sense-data presented to our visual organs; it is more than these sense-data, or any combination of them, because it is permanent and public to many observers, whereas the sense data are shifting and private. The object, in short, is object of thought (i.e. of sensation plus memory and imagination plus conceptual interpretation) and not object of sensation alone. But I do not follow Bergson in his view that thought falsifies or distorts the object... All thought is analytic, a 'breaking up' of the immediate unity of experience ; and it has two principal phases - analysis of the concrete datum, and universalization of the elements thus analyzed out. This latter phase yields judgements that are universal and necessary (and not mere tautologies) and gives rise to deductive inference. Thus the original unity of experience is

> reconstituted on a higher plane; unity given has become unity understood. Along this path we reach the notion of substance. For substance is precisely an 'intelligible unity', to which the mind penetrates by means of sense-data and the analysis of them. Thought's true and final object is an enduring 'thing' 'more fundamental than sense-data and which embraces and dominates sense-data in a higher unity'.[10]

This argument which goes beyond Bergson is in many ways compatible with A.N. Whitehead's theory of perception and conceptualization. Its advantage is that it allows for the intellectual faculty, the mind interacting with the physical world. For Whitehead, this process of interaction might be described as "concrescence" and the emergence of the object as an "actual event", while the object itself joins the world of "eternal objects", unreal only in Whitehead's special sense of not being actual but potential, available for inclusion in actuality. MacDiarmid's argument, like Whitehead's philosophy, transcends the oppositions of subject, material and ideal. The object which is the enduring "thing" of his higher synthesis is neither matter nor an idea, but a fusion resulting from the interaction of mind with the physical world. If this is true for the objects of our everyday experience, it is also true for the poetic image which therefore becomes equally real or effective. The poetic image, like the object, emerges from the process of the interaction between the mind and the world, from the analysis and universalization of the elements of the concrete datum. The resort to universals entails transcending the particular instance and the private experience and ensures that the eventual product will communicate and endure. (In this respect, MacDiarmid is actually closer to the Thomist position as expounded by Thomas Gilby which was discussed in the previous chapter). MacDiarmid thus avoids a difficulty in the aesthetic theory of Bergson and Hulme, for whom we remember, the poetic image was an objectification of a private intuition of reality (real time or duration) experienced by the privileged but passive poet. His intellect in abeyance, this poet's only activity

was to consist in translating his intuition into words. Even then,as we saw in previous chapters, Bergson tended to underplay this technical aspect of art and stress instead the peculiar quality of the artistic personality. A major drawback of this theory is that it ignores the public quality of language, and provides no guarantee that the artist's product will communicate his intuition or indeed anything at all.

The whole aim of MacDiarmid's poetry is to communicate, not only to communicate but to improve; not only to convey existing meaning but to create new meaning: not only to interpret life but to heighten and intensify life. He believes fervently in the perfectibility of man, in the emergence of a super race, not through any divine intervention, but through human effort. He believes " with Professor H.J. Muller that scientific development and a better social order can tap genius in every human being and create a society in which men like the greatest philosophers, poets and scientists in human history will no longer be, as they have always been hitherto, very rare exceptions, but the rule"[11]. Hence his Communism:

> If communism did not mean that - if it only meant doing away with a great deal of hardship and preventable pain and disease and death - if it only meant raising the economic level of everybody until it was as high as that of the wealthiest man in the world today, I would not move a little finger to assist the process.[12]

> Man does not cease to interest me
> When he ceases to be miserable.
> Quite the contrary!
> That it is important to aid him
> In the beginning goes without saying,
> Like a plant it is essential
> To water at first,
> But this is in order to get it to flower
> And I am concerned with the blossom.
>
> -Reflections in a Slum[13]

In the poet's opinion only a very few people are capable of promoting humanity; thus his stance is one of

extreme humanism and at the same time highly elitist. The elite are the artists and creators:

> Since I reached my majority I have understood clearly that only those few who are to some extent creative artists are really alive and capable of receiving and reciprocating true intellectual or spiritual communication at all, while all the others are consciously or unconsciously, but in the aggregate overwhelmingly and in a way that is responsible for all the major problems of mankind - on the merely practical as well as the higher plane - traitors to the human process.[14]

The creative artist, however, and especially the poet, can project new possibilities for the people. Not only can the poet renew and purify the language of the tribe, he can actually improve it. MacDiarmid quotes his friend, George Davie:

> The lesson of Erasmus and Scaliger is to show how a language by reverting to its classical words and usages can be transformed out of a colourless jargon into language grand and precise, capable of being put to the highest literary uses ... Doughty then, learned from the Humanists that the artificial improvement of language (denied on all hands) is within human power.[15]

These passages reveal something of MacDiarmid's concern for language, his interest in linguistics, his ceaseless experimentation in Scots and English, his enthusiasm for gleanings from other languages and literatures with which he augments his own writing. This concern has been lifelong and in some respects culminates in In Memoriam James Joyce which as the longest complete and published example of his later writing and as "A Vision of World Language" is of crucial importance for understanding the motives which have driven MacDiarmid from English to Scots back to augmented English, and which have inspired his life work. However, before we come to the actual text we need to consider the wider context of the poet's exploration of Scots, English and "world language" particularly in relation to his political commitments as a Communist and a Scottish Nationalist.

MacDiarmid's role in the Scottish Literary Renaissance and in recovering Scots as a respectable literary medium has been attested and documented by a host of his contemporaries and successors, even by those who, having suffered from his irascible pen, have little reason to love or flatter him. The question of a separate Scottish culture, of a distinct Scottish temperament, of the inadequacy of English for Scottish writers: all these issues were hotly debated from the early twenties though the controversy became most acrimonious with the publication of Edwin Muir's Scott and Scotland (London, 1936) which rejected the Scots revival and was regarded as a betrayal by MacDiarmid and his followers.

Several accounts have been written of the Scottish Renaissance and the part played by MacDiarmid, the best known and most substantial probably being that by Duncan Glen.[16] But since our concern is primarily with MacDiarmid and his individual quest for a language, we must confine ourselves to two or three central questions. Why, particularly in view of his early awareness of a wide range of international literature, did MacDiarmid feel it necessary to return to the impoverished and provincial vernacular, to write in Scots? Secondly, how far are the politics of Scottish Nationalism compatible or involved with the work of the poet? And thirdly, why, having almost single-handedly recreated Scots as a literary medium, did MacDiarmid use it less and less from the thirties onward and turn instead to the writing of very long poems, or rather one enormously long poem, predominantly in English?

Perhaps the first thing we should remember is the distance MacDiarmid had to come, may be further than any of the other moderns, even including Pound. Though he himself was widely read in English and American literature even in his teens,[17] he was largely self-educated and the literary circles in which he moved as a young student-teacher in Edinburgh were far from advanced.

As late as 1925, writing his notorious column on "Contemporary Scottish Studies" in the Scottish Educational Journal, he was forced to hold up the English Georgians as an example to Scottish poets:

> the English Georgians have severally an address, a range, a body of work, and a representative status and influence that not one of the Scottish Georgians has yet reached.[18]

Indeed, when we look through the tepid late Victorian lyrics of kailyard verse which constituted the mass of published Scottish poetry, we can understand why, as late as in 1925, the English Georgians were considered a worthy model and how pointless it would have been to introduce the names of Eliot, Pound or Joyce, even if MacDiarmid himself had assimilated these authors. In 1920 MacDiarmid, at that time still C.M. Grieve, began the series of publishing and editing ventures by which he was to promote Scottish literature with his first Northern Numbers anthology. MacDiarmid explains the exercise in Lucky Poet:

> I began, when I issued my Northern Numbers anthology, by displaying the best of thework available by living Scottish poets; and side by side with it introduced work by other younger and then quite unknown poets, including myself, who had very different ideas from those prevalent. I was able to do this because I had a completely different background myself - I was not limited to or over-affected by English influences, but was thoroughly au fait with the work of l'avant-garde of several European countries - France, Germany, Belgium, Russia. The well-known poets represented alongside les jeunes in the earlier issues - Neil Munro, John Buchan, General Sir Ian Hamilton, Violet Jacob, Charles Murray, Lewis Spence, Donald Mackenzie - were speedily, and no doubt a trifle unceremoniously dropped, and the field was left to the rising school. I have been accused of ill-faith in securing the association in this way of men who were relatively distinguished - and then dropping them. I cannot see any ill-faith was involved at all. I simply took the position as it then was at its best - determined to proceed thence to a different position altogether. Whatever use I had for the work of Neil Munro and others at the beginning I speedily lost as I got 'further ben' in my chosen task.[19]

The quality or lack of it in available Scottish poetry may be gauged from these three anthologies.[20] There are a few glimpses of promise, but even Grieve's own lyrics (in English) rarely rise above the commonplace or the cliché, though there are hints of his own peculiar talent, as in the last lines of "Mountain Measure":

> Lifts sheerly in the staring light
> To the unknowledgeable skies
> Bastions of ivory and jet,
> Vivid with ice and black with antique fire,
> That have withstood the whirling suns and storms
> Of countless centuries
> Whereunto they were vibrant cymbals once,
> Instant with black and scarlet chords,
> Frenzying the stars.
>
> And all man's thoughts are but as winds
> That in the valleys still
> Spin gravel.
>
> -First Series, p.71

We recognize the predilection for the sensation of cosmic vertigo, as well as the fondness for ornate vocabulary which occasionally results in magnificent oddness but equally likely in poetic cliché, "Bastions of ivory and jet". It might be suggested that this uncertainty of touch is not simply the mark of a young poet but of one who is writing in a language which is not his own, or not his first language, and who therefore falters between idiom, cliché and poetic coinage.

As an example of how tired Scots verse could be even in Northern Numbers here is the first stanza and refrain from "Hame (St. Andrew's Day under the Southern Cross)" by Mary Symon:

> God bless our land, our Scotland,
> Grey glen an'misty brae,
> The blue heights o' the Coolins,
> The green haughs yont the Spey,
> The weary wastes on Solway,
> Snell winds blaw owre them a'
> But aye it's Hame, lad,
> Yours an'mine, lad,
> Shielin' or ha'.

It's Hame, its Hame for ever,
  Let good or ill betide!
The croon o' some dear river,
  The blink o' ae braeside.

-Second Series, p.127

If then, Scottish literature was in such a parlous condition when MacDiarmid started to write, why did he not choose to write in English as so many Scots had done before him. After all, Yeats and the chief figures of the Anglo-Irish Renaissance had succeeded in producing great work in English. MacDiarmid rejects this view roundly, though we may consider his argument specious:

Viewed comprehensively, modern Anglo-Irish literature derives all its motivation from the movement for the repudiation both of England's Empire and language, and is intentionally cultivated as at once a sort of barrier against English culture and a preparation for the creation of an Irish culture in Gaelic. Far from taking advantage of the English literary tradition, as Mr. Muir in advising Scotsmen to assimilate themselves to it avers the Irish have done, the Irish have rejected it and their present Anglo-Irish work is completely influenced in technique and in matter by Irish-Gaelic traditions and by foreign non-English models.[21]

More positive and convincing reasons, both personal and representative, for his rejection of English and decision to write in English may be adduced. First of all, we know that he was brought up to speak Scots. George Bruce says:

MacDiarmid's synthetic Scots, as it unhappily has been called, was based on a Scots that he himself spoke, and which he heard all about him in the Borders. To this day the English he speaks is closer to Scots or Lallans than anything spoken south of the Tweed. Hence in all his poetry in Scots the language has authority, no matter how much vocabulary he may have added by consulting literary source for Scots words.[22]

Certainly, in his Scots poetry MacDiarmid is capable of a directness and simplicity which he rarely achieves in English. As was suggested earlier, both his poetry and prose in English, with their poly-syllabic vocabulary, convoluted phraseology and accumulating clauses, seem like the production of someone for whom English is predominantly an acquired and literary language.

He himself argued that English as a literary medium was exhausted, that it had become a language of abstractions and dissociation. Discussing Burns, he quotes from Trigant Burrow's The Biology of Human Conflict:

"Because of the increasing extension throughout the community of a dissociative process that substituted words for the physiologicial experience assumed to underlie them, man has increasingly lost touch with the hard and fast milieu of actual objects and correspondingly with the biological solidarity of his own organism."[23]

This dissociation is felt particularly strongly by Scots men and women because:

Scots is used for the full range of discourse by the great majority of Scots still (though, of course, they know English too and can screw themselves up to "speaking fine" when need be, albeit in so far as thinking in any language is not a mere metaphor - they think in Scots and have to translate their thought into English utterance).[24]

Scots is, therefore, the language of daily speech, although the cultural imperialism of England with the imposition of English as the respectable language for literature and polite society which began at the Reformation and was reinforced by the Act of Union, has led to the decline of the vernacular into kail-yard dialect. However, even these disjecta membra, as MacDiarmid calls them, of the old Scottish tongue, retain a vividness which is missing from English, an inherent physicality, directness, pre-conceptual appeal. Remembering Hulme's term, we might say that the Scots language had not degenerated into "counter-words" as English had. It is interesting to note that MacDiarmid, like T.E. Hulme, sees the Renaissance as a turning point, though his objections to the Renaissance are more narrowly linguistic. He feels that the medieval writers, even up to Chaucer, and in Scots, Dunbar, were able to use language with an "intensity of feeling... a power of direct utterance",[25] a "here-and-now"-ness, which was destroyed by the ascendancy of classical and Romance literatures:

> Not only has English pursued an Ascendency Policy and refused practically all intercourse with Irish, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, the Scottish vernacular and even its own dialects, but it attempted to disown its own Anglo-Saxon sources in the same fashion.[26]

Kenneth Buthlay has shown how the directness of Scots and its retention within itself of live metaphor ("yow-trummle" = the cold spell in late July after the sheep-shearing when the newly shorn ewes tremble, or shiver)[27] allowed MacDiarmid to write lyrics in an austere, direct style much closer to the Imagists than anything he had achieved in English. Of course, one reason for the vividness of these Scots words is that they have not been staled by usage. But, as Buthlay further argues,[28] the medium of Scots bring MacDiarmid a certainty of touch which goes far beyond vocabulary; in particular, a subtlety of rhythm where the individual modern voice is counterpointed against the traditional ballad with a skill which answers the demand for the "sequence of the musical phrase" as successfully as any of the more innovatory forms of the Imagists. Here, in little, is the paradigm of tradition and the individual talent, where, through the exploitation of the old forms and the inherited language of the Makars and the anonymous balladeers, MacDiarmid enriches his own contribution and renews the culture of the past in the present. So, in order to be able to write in the present, to produce poetry of the same pitch and modernity as his peers in England, America and Europe, MacDiarmid had to go back to his own tradition and accelerate it into the twentieth century.

Given the history of the cultural tradition, the decision to use Scots has a political dimension. English, as we have said, is in Scotland the language of cultural imperialism and it is socially divisive. Scots was relegated to the working and peasant classes and became a purely verbal medium. Since it was thus repressed, it fragmented and decayed. Discussing this issue in relation to Robert Burns, MacDiarmid writes:

> Even in Burns's own day, the Scottish national tradition was in a stage of fragmentation and had so many mutually exclusive elements that it was practically impossible to articulate the disjecta membra and see it as a whole. Burns was constantly trying to get hold of books but even when he could get them they were generally the wrong books, since, owning to his circumstances, he was largely subject to English literary over-influences incompatible with his genius...

He quotes from Burns's letter:

> "This curse of fragmentary knowledge of what in all its fullness should have been their birthright, has afflicted all modern Scotsmen with any spark of genius".[29]

Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century, this decadent dialect Scots had become unfit for anything but vulgar or sentimental verse. Yet this degraded language was used day and daily by the great majority of Scottish people, particularly by the lower or working classes. Inevitably, this decay in language would lead to a dulling of awareness and prevent the heightening of political consciousness, social or national. Hence the imposition of English and the concomitant disparagement of Scots is an instrument of imperial and class repression, and the decision to use Scots, to renew Scots, as an attempt to "purify the language of the tribe" but in particular the Scottish working-class "tribe", was at once socialist and nationalist. MacDiarmid did believe that the repression of Scots, particularly through the educational system, had stunted the Scots mentality:

> Many teachers tell me that the children's abilities to express themselves, and, behind that, to think, are largely suppressed by official insistence upon the use of "correct English"... They actually think and could express themselves a great more readily and effectively in dialect. This tenacity of Scots in the life of our people is extraordinary. Observe the way even "educated people" lapse into it on convenient occasions, or when they are genuinely moved. To ban it from our schools is, therefore, a psychological outrage. A distinctive speech cannot be so retained in the intimate social life, in the thinking of a people without an accompanying subterranean continuance of all manner of distinctive mental states and potentialities.[30]

He argued that there was a distinctive Scottish psychology which could not express itself through the medium of English: "English is incapable of affording means of expression for certain of the chief elements of Scottish psychology".[31] This Scottish personality MacDiarmid explains in terms of the "Caledonian Antisyzygy", a notion first developed in Professor Gregory Smith's Scottish Literature: Character and Influence (1919). Smith suggested that the Scottish psychology and literature are composed of a number of antim mies and contradictions, most striking of which is the predilection for concrete realities, for the commonplaces of everyday living, even to the earthiest and most lewd particulars, counterbalanced by an enthusiasm for fantasy, for speculation, for giddy flights of imagination:

> Though the Scottish Muse has loved reality, sometimes to maudlin affection for the commonplace, she has loved not less the airier pleasure to be found in the confusion of the senses, in the fun of things thrown topsy-turvy in the horns of elf-land and the voices of the mountains... There is more in the Scottish antithesis of the real and fantastic than is to be explained by the familiar rules of rhetoric. The sudden jostling of contraries seems to preclude any relationship by literary suggestion. The one invades the other without warning. They are the 'polar twins' of the Scottish Muse.[32]

However true this notion may be for the Scottish people in general, it clearly helped MacDiarmid interpret himself to himself and reconcile his different enthusiasms and the conflicting aspects of his personality. He was probably further encouraged by his reading of Chestov (Shestov), the Russian writer and religious thinker whom the poet owns as one of his early masters and who also based his philosophy on the pursuit of opposite extremes.[33] Thus the contradictions in MacDiarmid's work become, not an embarrassment, but a guiding principle. It is a risky procedure to quote from MacDiarmid's writings or to claim that he holds a particular opinion for, as in the Bible, a text can always be found to support exactly the opposite point of view.

Buthlay quotes from The Annals of the Five Senses (1923) an attempt by the poet to interpret a personality similar to his own:

> So his tendency was always to the whole, to the totality, to the general balance of things. Indeed it was his chiefest difficulty (and an ever-increasing one that made him fear at times cancellation to nonentity) to exclude, to condemn, to say No. Here, probably, was the secret of the way he used to plunge into the full current of the most inconsistent movements, seeking, always in vain, until he was utterly exhausted ... to find ground upon which he might stand foursquare.[34]

This constant need to interrogate himself, to try and find out who or what he is,the awareness of chaos and confusion which underlies his most dogmatic assertions may be inferred from the famous passage in "A Drunk Man Looks at a Thistle":

> I'll ha'e nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur
> Extremes meet - it's the only way I ken
> To dodge the curst conceit o' bein' right
> That damns the vast majority o' men.
>
> I'll bury nae heid like an ostrich's
> Nor yet believe my een and naething else.
> My senses may advise me, but I'll be
> Mysel' nae maitter what they tell's [35]

We may speculate that this fundamental uncertainty stems in part from the language problem, that the process of education which deprived the poet of his native accent and forced him into a language and rhythm not his own brought about a dissociation between his literary efforts and the intimacy of his own voice and speaking patterns. MacDiarmid and the majority of Scottish writers believed that they had no choice other than to write in English, whether their work was poetry, prose or mere journalism, and so it seemed their condition was imposed rather than chosen. The return to Scots therefore was an act of self-liberation, whereby MacDiarmid asserted his independence and nationality, dared to acknowledge his own accent and thereby reunited the spoken and written word. It was only when he found that he could write successfully in the "braid Scots" that he could extend his range

to a mixture of Scots and English and eventually to that augmented English of his later poems which is not the English of the Home Counties nor of English Imperialism but the individual English with a Scottish or Borders accent of Hugh MacDiarmid, and at the same time, with its influx of foreign influences and "weltliteratur" an internationalist English, transcending class and race, a contribution to and prefiguration of the total poem, or the "world language".

So MacDiarmid returned to Scots and became the principal instigator for its revival as a literary language. But the Scots was not simply the vernacular which he had grown up with in Langholm, nor was it the hackney vocabulary and clichés of Burns's imitators and the kailyard versifiers, nor was it even the Scots of the Auld Makars, despite the cry of "Back to Dunbar". MacDiarmid did not want a Scots which was that of the historian or scholar, nor that of the village "wut" but rather a poet's Scots, a Scots which was capable of becoming a language for the whole man and for an entire people, a language which could serve intellect and emotion by making use of the complete range of existing vocabulary and locutions available to it and by absorbing and generating new usages. This indeed would be a synthetic and synthesizing Scots, but only thus could it become a living, natural language.

Nevertheless the controversies over "synthetic" Scots have been protracted and acrimonious: battle has been waged against MacDiarmid not only by those who opposed any return to Scots, but also, often as a result of misunderstanding of his aims, by supporters of regional Scots dialects on the one hand, or by linguistic scholars and historians on the other. The first group objected to MacDiarmid's eclecticism, his mixing of dialects from different areas; the second group pounced with delight on anachronisms and inaccurate usages. MacDiarmid may have drawn very largely on Jamieson's Etymological

Dictionary of the Scottish Language and on the old ballad books, but his practice was that of a poet rather than a pedant. Buthlay writes:

> In availing himself of such rich and concentrated resources of language, the poet was not concerned with whether any particular expression became officially obsolete ages ago, or was used only within a twelve-mile radius of Kirkcudbright in 1899. But, on the other hand, neither was he systematically building up what Saurat termed a "synthetic" language with the help of Jamieson and the "Golconda of racy old terms" he found in George Beattie's John o'Arnha' and William Nicholson's Brownie of Blendnock. Rather, he approached Scots words, any Scots words, as potential material for poetry, and relied on his sensitivity towards verbal stimuli to select what his imagination could put to use in a poem.[36]

Since MacDiarmid placed the date for the Scottish "dissociation of sensibility" at the Renaissance and looked to Dunbar as Eliot looked back to Donne for his poetic model of a unified consciousness, it was on the re-discovery of the "Auld Makars" that he based his call for a revival of Scots. In Lucky Poet he expresses his own sense of the advantages which arise out of the long neglect of Scottish culture; "we found ourselves with so much to discover, a whole terra incognita to revel in".[37] A prime reason for going back to Dunbar and Henrysoun was, of course, to escape the terrible over-familiarity of the Burns tradition. "Not Burns - Dunbar!" is the poet's cry in Albyn (p.36) and he argued that: "Those who would try (to revitalize Scots) must first of all recover for themselves the full canon of Scots used by the Auld Makars and readapt it to the full requirements of modern self-expression".

> In Dunbar (young poets) see (the richness and resource of the Scots language) displayed in a way far beyond anything accomplished since. They see Scots allied to noble ideas, high imaginings, 'divine philosophy', and no longer confined to the foothills of Parnassus, and when they resurvey the problem of the revival of Scots from that angle, many of the difficulties of readjusting and utilizing it to serious literary purpose which have hitherto proved baffling are dispelled.[38]

The revival of outworn vocabulary and forgotten usages results in the enrichment of language and the recovery of meaning and history. MacDiarmid quotes Vivante: "the words find by themselves a thousand avenues, the deepest and truest conceptual affinities; 'they reconnect forgotten kinships'".[39] On the larger scale this process becomes the attempt to restore the unity of the language, to reintegrate and revitalize the disjecta membra and thereby to reunify the national identity of the Scots. Declaring in his chapter "on Seeing Scotland Whole" in Lucky Poet that the search for Scottish unity was "one of the main concerns of my life",[40] MacDiarmid has tried through his poetry to bring together all aspects of Scottish life and history so as to create a Scottish identity. Hence the long "Direadh" poems which "attempt to give birds'-eye views - or, rather, eagles'-eye views - of the whole of Scotland, each from a different vantage-point". These poems are crammed with names of places, with details of natural history and geology, with persons and occupations, in a manner which reminds us of Whitman:

> Now I remember in particular an inn near Coldingham.
> Mine host was a man after my own heart ... [41]

> Now I see all my land and my people
> As I saw Berwickshire and East Lothian then
> With every particularity completely realized,
> Brimming with prosperity and no waste anywhere,
> And note once more as I cast my eyes this way and that
> How the healthy well-fed flickering turnip breadths
> Are more vivid in their green between the woods...

Or, again, turning to fishes,

> I sing of
> The Sandsucker and the Blue-striped Wrasse,
> Six kinds of Crobies, the Saury Pike,
> Yarrell's Bleny and the Silvery Gade
> (Long lost to science), and scores of the like.
> The Bonito, the Tunny, the Sea-Perch, and the Ruffe,
> The Armed Bullhead, the Wolf-fish, and the Scad,
> The Power Cod and the Whiting Pout,
> The Twaite Shad and the Alice Shad,
> The Great Forked Beard, the Torsk, the Brill
> The Glutinous Hag, the Starry Ray,
> Muller's Topknot, and the Unctuous Sucker.

So much for cataloguing![42]

This passage is surely revealing with its invitation to laughter. One aspect of MacDiarmid's poetry is that it is comic, perhaps as Joyce is comic. His catalogues differ from Whitman's in that they are self-conscious; the technique is in itself part of their significance. Moreover, the catalogue is carried to an extreme which is absurd; yet though we may laugh, it is not invalidated; part of our laughter must spring from the recognition of the ludicrous richness and variety of life and language here presented to us. In his ambition to be the bard of his people, the regenerator of their culture through theprojection of language, MacDiarmid "kept constantly in mind Rilke's dictum that 'the poet must know everything', and Pushkin's dicta (1) that 'the whole of his country's history beongs to the poet', and (2) that 'only barbarism, villainy and ignorance do not respect the past, cringing before the present alone'".[43]

Scots was to be revived to reunite the Scottish people, yet these later poems are not in Scots. In any case, Scots is not the first language of large numbers of Scotsmen, for instance, the Gallic speakers or even the Shetlanders with the traces of Old Norse which distinguish their dialect. From the outset, MacDiarmid was very aware of the importance of Gallic and originally contemplated the renaissance of Scotland as a Celtic, Gaelic speaking nation, with the revival of Scots as a half-way stage.[44] However, he realized that the Scottish Renaissance must exploit to the full <u>all</u> the different linguistic and cultural traditions of Scotland:

> The Scottish Renaissance Movement is even more concerned with the revival of Gaelic than of Scots. It regards Scotland as a diversity-in-unity to be stimulated at every point, and, theoretically at any rate, it is prepared to develop along trilingual lines.[45]

MacDiarmid as leader of the Scottish Renaissance and its chief voice sought to combine in himself these diverse cultural traditions. His early interest in Gaelic was

reinforced by the translations he made in association with Sorley MacLean of the "Birlinn of Clamranald" by Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair and Duncan Ban MacIntyre's "Praise of Ben Dorain". Tags from the Gaelic poets and reference to Gaelic writing in Scotland and Ireland recur throughout his poetry, illustrating his conviction that Scotland is essentially a Celtic nation and that the future of history lies with the Celtic peoples, indeed in a Celtic-Slav alliance.

However, as has been pointed out, MacDiarmid's nationalism is always to be placed within the context of his internationalism. He speaks of his

> comprehensive concern to take in all the elements in the situation or scene, wherever possible bringing the theme down to concrete cases, individual men and women, and giving the latitude and longitude with reference to the world outside Scotland - placing the Scottish instance in the widest international context - and always interpreting Nature in terms of human activities, being alert to the historical process etc.

Hoping to take Scotland as his centre and from it move out to world consciousness, he wishes:

> that it could one day be said of me, as of Mistral:
>
> Singing not of particular deeds and persons
> But of a whole land and a whole people,
> And beginning with his native region,
> Ended by embracing all nations
> In one amphictyoncia - a vision in parvo
> Of the labours of all mankind. [47]

MacDiarmid complained that when he began to write "Scotland had nothing ready for me".[48] Singlehandedly, or virtually so, he forged a language and restored a culture, but while his fellow-poets were still attempting to assimilate the revival of Scots and the nationalist stance he moved on to his poetry of world-language and international consciousness. His career and writings are as much a projection as an achievement, forecasting the direction he expects literature and humanity to take; his poetry may be regarded as a prototype for language and through language, for mankind. In seeking the motives

which led MacDiarmid beyond Scots to long poems like In Memoriam James Joyce we must now consider some of his wider philosophical and ideological notions, his internationalism and his communism, his general "Weltanschauung".

In Memoriam James Joyce, part of the "unpublished long poem of world consciousness" is philosophical and political in the widest sense in that it entails a vision for the future of mankind the realization of which it tries to further. Clearly MacDiarmid's politics and his philosophical ideas are very relevant to the form and nature of his poetry. He has developed his own peculiar version of Marxism, modified by Celtic mysticism, the wilder flights of Russian and German metaphysicians as well as by the more eccentric speculations of biologists, eugenicists and cultural anthropologists. Among the difficulties in trying to establish what the poet actually does believe is that where ideas are concerned he is a magpie and will incorporate an isolated thought or paragraph into his own ideology even from a writer with whom, in other respects, he has no sympathy. Moreover, since, as we have seen, he believes every idea to have value and considers that truth emerges as much from the juxtaposition or synthesis of contradictions as from individual ideas in themselves, it is beside the point to charge him with inconsistency or self-contradiction. These problems point to an important feature of MacDiarmid's work: the text stands on its own. The poet as creator, inventor and sometimes anthologist has retreated; we are forced to concentrate on the surface of the poem, on the relationships enacted between the different passages, ideas and words as they appear in the text. This may be termed the poetry of process: the elements of the poem interact creatively to establish an action and an organism which are purely poetic but which can refer back to or project action in the physical world. If we attempt to go behind the words, to follow up the cited authors, to trace sources, or to interpret the poem by knowledge of external systems or works, more often than not we shall

entangle ourselves in irrelevancies and add to the confusion. We may see this quality in MacDiarmid's work as an aspect of his communism; individualism is suppressed, so is the notion of copyright, or authorial property, as the work of art itself becomes autonomous and organic, "the production and property of all".[49]

Yet we still have difficulty reconciling MacDiarmid's strident egotism, his intellectual arrogance, his declared elitism with his equally vigorous profession of communism and concern for the common man. In many ways, MacDiarmid's views seem to coincide with those of the Fascist sympathisers, Pound, Yeats and Wyndham Lewis rather than with other British, or at least English, left-wingers. We know how he despised the "MacSpaunday" fellow-travellers and how little sympathy he had for popularised art, or literature watered down for the masses. However, his attempt at the long poem or epic, in its very inclusiveness, its refusal to select, differs from Pound's Cantos which, despite their range, are above all exclusive and selective. This difference is a consequence of the fundamental difference in the world views or ideological stances of the two poets.

Despite the clutter of antinomies and contradictions, and his enormous output, we can, I think, extract MacDiarmid's ideology from his writings; in fact, he has remained remarkably consistent in his essential beliefs at least since the mid-twenties though there have been additions and modifications which are the result of his work remaining open to the changing world. The danger lies in attempting to impose on him the system of any other thinker, be it Lenin or Chestov, two of his avowed "masters", or in seeking to interpret his ideas according to one's own notions of orthodox logic. In other words, we must to some extent regard MacDiarmid's entire opus as the artistic work, as a poetic universe with its own laws to which we submit, at least temporarily. This concession is a usual one to make to a work of art, but one which we may incline to withold from MacDiarmid's

writing partly because of its argumentative, ratiocinative qualities, partly because the demand he makes of us is too great. He seeks to absorb us into his "world of words", a total world which is to include every aspect of experience, but ordered according to MacDiarmid's vision. The poem of world consciousness is a political state and a totalitarian one; if we enter it, we surrender our freedom or at least our present concept of our freedom.

Yet we have seen that this is one of the functions of the epic poem as it is social and contributes to community. It seeks to involve us with each other as it absorbs us into itself by interpreting the past to us and projecting our future. The Anathemata draws mankind together in a celebration of the Mass, a ritual which at once revives and unifies the past and furthers the future reunification of God and man, the restoration of the One, the Logos, the creation of the Divine Man. MacDiarmid's poem pursues the same end, though his faith is placed more in the power of the human will than in the Divine. But ultimately this apocalyptic humanism differs very little from the milleniarian religions, as Middleton Murry for one seemed to recognize:

> What difference is there between believing in God and believing in Man - in life, in the future, in the unknown. The Communist does not believe in past Gods, he rejects them utterly and forever because he believes in the God that creates himself eternally in Man.[50]

MacDiarmid always refused to admit any specifically Christian quality in his work, but religious feeling, in the widest sense, is there, even in this denunciation:

> ...I do not believe in God at all. Like Etienne Gilson, 'I still want to know if my religious experience is an experience of God, or an experience of myself... In the first case only can there be a religion;... I can follow Bergson in his description of mystical intuition as a source of religious life, but I am still left wondering what the nature of that intuition actually is.' Only I do not still want to know, I know - it is just 'an experience of myself'. There is no religion.[51]

In 1975, in an interview with Walter Perrie, MacDiarmid discussed the relationship between poetry and religion:

CG (Christopher Grieve i.e. MacDiarmid): I find a lot of people who think they are Christians very anxious to call me a Christian poet, perhaps because I use a certain number of references to Christian dogma, because I may show a compassionate spirit in certain connections... If you're an atheist, there's no reason on earth why you should not create great poetry. As a matter of fact, study of literary history shows that far more of what we call the body of great poetry in Europe has been written by materialists than by believers, and that what is called religious poetry in any of the European literatures is derived from non-Christian and, indeed, anti-Christian sources...

WP: Do you think then that all good poets are essentially pagans?

CG: Yes, of course they are.[52]

This argument, as was seen in the study of The Anathemata, may have a degree of truth even when applied to David Jones. He has recourse to Celtic, pre-Christian, Mithradic and Roman cults, while the fundamental theme of his poem, man-the-artist makes himself into God, is heretical in the tradition of alchemical, neo-Platonic and Gnostic thinking.

In the same interview Perrie asks MacDiarmid:

WP: I take it you regard communism as essentially a spiritual force rather than in material terms.

CG: Yes I do.

WP: Given the nature and the trends which are evident in the contemporary world, do you see spiritual forces developing coherently in that world? When society is going through a period of great fragmentation do you see communism as a spiritual force and the practice of poetry developing along fruitful lines?

CG: It may take time. We are living at a very critical period in world history. But it was, I believe, an American who said that the main task confronting thepoet today is a great task of assimilation... It's because of the enormous variety {the new perspective of the sciences} (which ought to be the preoccupation of poetry and so seldom is) that most modern poetry is trivial and worthless.

WP: ...You would agree then that an important poem is necessarily a long poem?

CG: I think so. The epic is the only form which can discharge the duties of the poet in the modern world.[53]

Certainly, when we look at MacDiarmid's communism as it features in his poetry we find a much greater concern with man's spiritual development than with economic matters. The poet rarely stoops to advocate a practical programme, nor does he devote much time to an analysis of the present system on Marxist lines. His economic ideas, in so far as he does present them seem to have been as much shaped by C.H. Douglas and his Social Credit scheme as by anything in Marx. As late as 1966 MacDiarmid reaffirmed his opposition to the orthodox banking system and his support for Douglas. He makes two interesting points. The first, in anecdotal form, raises the problem of the link between Social Credit and Fascism:

A friend said to me in London when I was associated with Douglas, Orage, Mairet, Symons, Beckett, Canon Demant, John Hargrave of the Green Shirt movement, Arthur Brenton and other Douglasites: 'What are you doing among these people? Don't you realize they will all go religious-Fascist?' I did not realize anything of the kind, but they all did go religious-Fascist and I still do not see why that should be so. It certainly has not happened in my own case.[54]

This is a question which has not yet been satisfactorily answered; for our purposes, it is perhaps easier to ask why MacDiarmid did not go "Religious-Fascist", why he remained a socialist, a communist, despite his clear sympathies with Pound, Orage and the more shady figures who constituted the intellectual demi-monde of the twenties and thirties.

The second point MacDiarmid raises, again without answering it, is the problem of Communist opposition to Social Credit:

The Communist parties are vehemently opposed to Social Credit. Why? They operate the orthodox financial system - basically the same as in the capitalist countries... I myself, though a member

of the Communist Party have always believed - and still believe - that Major Douglas's proposals should be applied in the transitional period before the achievement of integrated Communism.

Over thirty years ago I was in regular correspondance with leading Social Creditors in the United States. One of them, Gorham B. Munson wrote a series of articles showing that Marxism and Social Credit were perfectly reconcilable. My other like-minded American correspondants included Waldo Frank and Kenneth Burke.[55]

MacDiarmid's own political development may be traced back to his childhood. From the first, he seems to have had a strong class consciousness, and awareness and deep hatred of the power of the gentry. He attributes this in part to his working-class, non-Conformist upbringing, so different from that experienced by the majority of the leftist English intellectuals:

If I came in the end to Communism (that is, to membership of the Communist Party, instead of the Independent Labour Party, of which I had by then been over twenty years an active member), I also grew into it through a class-conscious upbringing which conditioned but did not distort my view of life. My development owed a very great deal to my growing up in a working-class family and being fed on out-and-out Radicalism and Republicanism when still a child...

The tremendous proletarian virtue of the Langholm I knew as a boy saved me - despite the religiosity, the puritanism of both my parents, and the ambitious gentility of my mother, and despite my own literary gifts - from the ordeal so many writers and young artists are going through today, the extremely difficult ordeal of getting back to the people, of becoming once more organically welded with the working-class. From the beginning I took as my motto - and I have adhered to it all through my literary work - Thomas Hardy's declaration 'Literature is the written expression of revolt against accepted things.[56]

Reinforcing this class-consciousness was a growing awareness of the English oppression of Scotland, of the Scots as, at least culturally, a colonized people: (We notice again how intimately language is involved in political and social processes)

This class antagonism has been strong in me from the very start: when I was a boy to speak English was 'to speak fine', i.e. to ape the gentry and the very thought of anything of the sort was intolerable.[57]

So MacDiarmid, though he desired to be a poet from his youth, did not do so from a wish to escape or transcend his origins. His ambitions were bardic or Druidic but the tribe he wished to serve was based on the Scottish working people. Yet though he does sometimes indulge in that sentimentality which has so often been a failing of Communist propaganda and Communist sympathisers, that is, the belief that workers and peasants are somehow nobler, or have an essential goodness which is not possessed by the upper or middle classes, on the whole he interprets his task as being to raise these people through his poetry to the desired level. "My ambition was to be the creator of a new people". He was always aware of his intellectual superiority but had no wish to use it to climb socially and had as much or more contempt for the stupid aristocrat as he had for the stupid slum-dweller. Unlike so many of the English leftist writers of the thirties he maintained a deep and continuing commitment to Communism, albeit his own version of Communism, derived as much from James Connolly and John MacLean as from Marx or Lenin and coloured by his enthusiasm and by Social Credit. But he never did become a Fascist and probably never could have, as we feel Eliot or Auden might; neither did he retreat into the political conservatism of these writers, nor into the aestheticism of others.

Unlike these middle-class English products of the public schools and Oxford and Cambridge, MacDiarmid's impulse towards socialism sprang from material circumstances as well as from intellectual (or emotional) considerations. Though his education had a good foundation in Langholm Acadamy and the Broughton Junior Student Centre in Edinburgh (a sort of teacher training institute) he worked for a living from the age of nineteen and his vast erudition was acquired without the benefit of university facilities or the time in which to make use of them. He was a serving soldier (RAMC) in World War I and in his subsequent career often suffered severe

hardships many of which would have been avoided had he been a member of the middle-class establishment.

> In Whalsay, however, the Grieves were very hard up. It had from the first been Christopher's rule to give at least half of his literary output without fee to aid the Renaissance and the Nationalist movement, so that, though Chris was writing a lot at this time, he was receiving very little for it. It came to the point that the local store refused further credit and starvation, literally, threatened.[58]

Involvement in civic and political affairs had been characteristic of MacDiarmid's life since he joined the Independent Labour Party at the age of sixteen; in Montrose, as well as working as a campaigning editor-reporter, he was a Labour Councillor, member of the School Management Committee and a J.P.; he campaigned vigorously and variously for Scottish Nationalism, for Communism, for MacLean Worker-Republicanism (after 1939) from the platforms and periodicals available to him, several of the latter which he founded himself; he stood twice for Parliament, once as a Scottish Nationalist, once as a Communist, both times unsuccessfully. During the war MacDiarmid was directed to a munitions job on the Clyde:

> I qualified as a precision fitter and obtained a job with a big general engineering firm, Mechans of Scottstoun... I was given charge of the Copper Shell Band Section, turning the bands of copper cups by a battery of power lathes, and then case-hardening them in an electric furnace. I enjoyed this work, but the hours involving compulsory overtime were long and I had to travel to work in the morning and return home at night all in the black-out conditions. So my health began to trouble me again. I had made a good recovery from a serious general break-down I had in 1935, but the very rough condition at Mechans and the fact that I suffered serious injuries when a stack of copper-cuttings fell on me and cut both my legs very severely led me to seek a transfer to the Merchant Service.[59]

This was granted and MacDiarmid spent the rest of the war as a seaman on ships engaged on estuarial duties at Greenock.

These biographical details have been introduced to show that for MacDiarmid the question of action has never been a problem. He never had to choose between the cloister and the active life; experience was thrust on him, he did not have to seek it as "material". The dichotomy between art and life did not trouble him for his theory, his literary activity and his working life were all directed to the same end. This accounts for the nature of such periodicals as the Voice of Scotland where ephemeral journalism, political theorising and propaganda are found side by side with and are often indistinguishable from (especially in the case of MacDiarmid's own writings) literary discussions and contributions. This quality is reflected in the later poetry; for MacDiarmid, it all forms part of the whole.

Moreover, because for MacDiarmid the impulse towards socialism came from the first-hand experience of deprivation and inequality, his attitude to political involvement, while it may be anarchic, is not nihilistic. His communism is positive, not as it was for John Strachey, the last recourse, the lesser of two evils, Communism and Fascism. Indeed, it was only after Mosley's New Party had failed him that Strachey became a Communist. Several writers have pointed out that for Auden and many of his generation communism or socialism were seen as an escape from the Waste Land, but an escape that was nihilistic, suicidal; - "In the Destructive element, immerse". It was seen as the only possibility remaining since the nursery world of pre-war Edwardian England and "country-house at the ends of drives" could never be recovered.[60] MacDiarmid from birth had been on the opposite side to the country house dwellers and he well remembered that pre-war Britain had been just as much of a struggle for his classes as were the thirties. Hence though the final end of his Communism was as visionary as that of Auden, Spender or Day Lewis, his sense of present needs and practicalities was much stronger, and his political awareness on the tactical and strategic levels was greater,

with the result that his poetry relates to the adult world and and contingent realities rather than to private fantasies of derring-do, or allegories of the schoolroom and college study.

It has already been noted that MacDiarmid's position is humanistic rather than religious; on T.E. Hulme's terms, he would be regarded as a Romantic, for he believes that man can improve himself through his own will and that the whole is to be created, rather than restored. Poetry is therefore creative and its ultimate aim is total meaning, to achieve the Logos. The only political philosophy compatible with this goal is, for MacDiarmid, his own brand of Marxist-Leninism which stresses the potential of man:

> This faith that human experience and culture will expand immensely in an era of abundance and social ownership has been an essential of Communist thinking from Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme (1875) and Engels's Socialism, Utopian and Scientific (1880) to Lenin's The State and Revolution (1918), and it appears again, with confidence that it is on the verge of realization, in the Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted by their 22nd Congress in October 1961.

So though MacDiarmid may be a Romantic in one sense, his is not the Romanticism which harkens back to childhood, or to a better, simpler age. He is writing for adults and to create adults.[61] In "Second Hymn to Lenin" he castigates his fellows:

> We're grown-ups that ha'ena yet
> Put bairnly things aside [62]

but finds the remedy in poetry, a poetry which demands the full rigour of the intellect and the whole range of human knowledge:

> Nae simple rhymes for silly folk
> But the haill art, as Lenin gied
> Nae Marx-without-tears to workin' men
> But the fu' course insteed.
>
> Organic constructional work,
> Practicality, and work by degrees;
> First things first; and poetry in turn
> 'll be built by these.[63]

In this vision, poetry becomes the overarching activity of man to which all other activites, including science and politics are subordinate contributors:

> Sae here, twixt poetry and politics,
> There's nae doot in the en'.
> Poetry includes that and s'ud be
> The greatest poo'er amang men.[64]

Poetry is man's articulation of himself:

> language as the instrument
> For the progressive articulation of the world
> In spatial and temporal terms.[65]

and thereby the working out of his will. Since, if man is to be as whole, as complete, as complex as possible, no element of human experience should go unnamed or unplaced, the poet is forced to adopt a radical egalitarianism:

> For a poet maun see in a' thing
> Ev'n what looks trumpery or horrid
> A subject equal to ony
> - A star for the forehead!
>
> A poet has nae choice left
> Betwixt Beaverbrook, say, and God.
> Jimmy Thomas or you,
> A cat, carnation, or clod.
>
> He daurna turn awa' frae ocht
> For a single act o' neglect
> And straught he may fa' frae grace
> And be void o'effect.[66]

The poet's end then, is the end of the entire species; to be as God, to know the sparrows of the field, number the hairs of the head, to be omniscient. David Craig accuses MacDiarmid of failure in the later long poems, seeing them as:

> terrible monuments to his final failure to fulfil a text from Lenin that he quotes twice in Lucky Poet: "It would be a serious mistake to suppose that one can become a Communist without making one's own the treasures of human knowledge... Communism becomes an empty phrase, a mere facade, and the Communist a mere bluffer, if he has not worked over in his consciousness the whole inheritance of human knowledge".. (Speech to the 1922 Comintern Congress)[67]

Whether or not we agree that MacDiarmid has failed, we must recognize that this sort of Communist must be his sort of poet, and herein lie the reasons for his voracious appetite for facts, for knowledge, for 'welt-literatur'. All these things are products of the interaction between mind and matter; they are, therefore, real and in that reality lies their truth. MacDiarmid's enthusiasm for facts is not to be regarded as a rejection of fictions; he knows, as we also should have come to realize, that even apparently glaringly obvious facts are no more than fictions or theories. The whole body of knowledge amounts to all the products of the human mind to which we assign temporary value and order; true, false, fact, fiction, art, science etc. Today we accept a modified Copernican system of astronomy, but Ptolemaic theory remains a part of our knowledge. The "world of words" attempts to capture this total knowledge and to give it form through order and evaluation:

> A protest, invaluable to science itself
> Against the exclusion of value
> From the essence of matter of fact.[68]

> -A fact that has no value is not a fact
> It means that when the scientist has discovered a fact
> Which is a fact, he has therefore discovered a value
> That is sufficient to gainsay all the nonsense
> That is being talked about blind forces!
> If a force is real it is also important.
> If it is blind its blindness has value.
> Why are so many people clamouring for free will?
> Because they cannot see that fact has value,
> They cannot see that will as a fact
> Has any significance. To give it value
> They must divorce it from fact.[69]

Here MacDiarmid seems to be arguing that it is our consciousness which constitutes our freedom and the greater our consciousness, the greater will be our freedom as we find ourselves more fully in accord and in command of the process of history. If individual consciousness arises in the more highly evolved organism, so political consciousness arise in the highest form of society. But that progress of evolution to consciousness is poetry;

without poetry, without articulation the universe continues, but it is apprehended blindly and with terror as Chaos, the void, the Abyss, silence. The study of In Memoriam James Joyce will reveal further the importance of this silence, the silence which is the totality or plenum, the unsayable Logos:

> We know that total speech is impossible of course,
> Like a too big star that therefore could transmit no light,
> Like the dumbness finally desired by Tyutchev and Pasternak [70]

All speech, all individual articulations are only products of the process which moves from the inarticulate silence of total disorder to the inconceivable silence of fully achieved order. Yet that silence or nothingness which arises out of ignorance, or failure to name, is evil in the Thomist sense that it is a deprivation of good, a deficiency in actuality. The poet's task, therefore, is not simply to impose pattern on his experience by selection; it is to order the whole of his experience and to extend that experience through the process of appetition[71] in the continuing struggle of life for higher and more complex organization and against disorder and entropy. The poem itself, as the most intense ordering of language, is the product and sign of complex organization. It is as the total poem, the whole of knowledge is assembled and ordered, made available, that the envisioned new Adam, Communist Man will emerge, a superman in whose advent MacDiarmid believed sufficiently to embrace the eccentric eugenics of H.J. Muller in Out of the Night (London, 1936). This new man who is to arise from man's conscious development of science, biology and genetic engineering is not, however, the romantic hero or great leader of the Fascists; he is rather a representative member of an improved species. The notion and their connotations may seem equally frightening but they are not the same. MacDiarmid believes that mankind collectively has tremendous potential and unused power, and that it is the task of the poet as humanity's voice and most highly developed consciousness to put man in touch with himself so that he may realize his full capacity.

We shall see in the study of In Memoriam James Joyce how this is attempted through the creative power of the word and through the absorption of the physical and subjective worlds into the higher reality of language.

In Memoriam James Joyce

Hugh MacDiarmid's In Memoriam James Joyce: A Vision of World Language was published in 1955 as the first of four volumes of a major long poem, Mature Art. This vast poem has had several titles, or else several projected long poems have merged with or superceded each other, e.g. Cornish Heroic Song for Valda Trevlyn, Impavidi Progrediamur, etc. This total work has never been published, and since it seems that its essential nature is to be a projection, a potentiality, probably its completion was never a real possibility. A number of volumes intervene between this poem and MacDiarmid's earlier masterpiece A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (1926) at least as far as we can tell from publication dates, although MacDiarmid was probably working on many of his projects concurrently. Much of the poem was certainly written between 1933 and 1941 while the poet was on Whalsay in the Shetland Islands. A version of Mature Art was finished some time before 1938, but sections of In Memoriam James Joyce can only have been written later. The Karl Kraus passages (p.44f), which were cited in the notorious Times Literary Supplement correspondence of 1965, derive from a Times Literary Supplement leader for May 5th, 1953. Long extracts purporting to be from the larger work have appeared at different dates and in different forms. Part of the overlap and confusion no doubt arises from publishing difficulties, but on the other hand the interdependence of so many of the works is an essential feature of MacDiarmid's poetry.

We find, for example, that long passages of In Memoriam James Joyce first appeared in Lucky Poet (1943). Again, there are passages of In Memoriom James Joyce

which quite clearly form part of "The Kind of Poetry I Want", Chapter III in Lucky Poet, but do not actually appear there,[72] while this chapter and indeed the book as a whole provide the best commentary and explanation of In Memoriam James Joyce. Other prose passages from Lucky Poet appear in In Memoriam as verse (e.g. "England is our Enemy"). Moreover, favourite sources and themes will be used over and over again. The Gaelic vision poem "Gile na Gile" which is used in "Plaited Like the Generations of Men" and informs many other sections of the book has already been used by MacDiarmid on a number of other occasions, such as in Circumjack Cencrastus (1930), "Aodhagan O Rathaille sang this song". Thus we cannot point to anything so simple as a development through English, Scots and Gaelic stages. All the elements overlap; common to them and central to MacDiarmid's entire poetic effort is the search for a language, a language which will first allow him to speak in a full, undivided voice and which will make possible the unification of human consciousness. In Memoriam James Joyce is the poet's most ambitious attempt to deal with the nature of language. Hence Hilary Corke, reviewing the poem for Encounter, acclaimed it as a "Text" despite its "guttersnipe trumpetings" because it is a "profoundly measured contemplation of one of the central problems of our time, that of language".[73] It is a poem about language and seeks to extend itself to the boundaries of language, to become or include the whole of language or to have all language become poetry.

One problem which should be confronted as soon as possible in any consideration of MacDiarmid's work is the question of authorship. Even the most perfunctory reading of In Memoriam James Joyce will reveal that large chunks of it are not by MacDiarmid, at least not in the sense that he was the first to use particular words in particular arrangements. Apart from these verbatim quotations, there are passages which are very roughly paraphrased and others which are potted arguments from other

men's work. Some of these sources are acknowledged; most are not. The manner of acknowledgement may be misleading; for instance, the passage on de Quincey which appears on p.137 and is cited in the prefatory note, does have the footnote "Vide Thomas de Quincey's Suspiria". This is fair enough, as far as it goes, for the quotations indicated in the passage are indeed by de Quincey and from Suspiria; but they and the passage in which they are embedded are taken, with virtually no alterations apart from line divisions and certain omissions, from a Times Literary Supplement article of June 10th, 1939 (p.340). The persona of the poet who has read everything is thus reinforced. This pattern is repeated throughout the poem, as in the Stifter passage (p.110) discussed below.

The plagiarism, if such it be, is not confined to the obviously "prosy" passages. The revelation that the poem "Perfect" (Selected Poems, 1934), "the poem the Imagists talked about but did not write" had appeared first as prose by Glyn Jones, and was then versified by Keidrich Rhys, before reaching print over MacDiarmid's name, must make any critic very wary of praising the gifts of the poet rather than the poetry itself. The complexity of the problem is increased by MacDiarmid's disingenuousness. He "forgets", he "subconsciously memorizes", he gives misleading or inadequate acknowledgements, he makes straight denials which later have to be modified. "Minor poets borrow, major poets steal": maybe, but most are more tactful.

MacDiarmid's psychological constitution would no doubt have made a fascinating study, - but for the psychologist not for the critic attempting to come to terms with the poem. Whatever the reasons for his behaviour, ignoble, unconscious, subtle or devious the effect is the same. There is no author, no external figure to take responsibility for the poem. If we are prepared to engage with it at all, we must confine our attentions

to the text and the interpretations of significance will be reached very largely through the reader's interaction with the work. Perhaps we should consider it as anonymous or as nearly anonymous as Homer. MacDiarmid, or perhaps Grieve, the man as he is external to the poem is irrelevant, though of course MacDiarmid as he appears in the poem as an actor, as the speaking voice, is most important.

This problem of MacDiarmid's personality, the shrill voice which sounds so characteristic, so definite, yet which when examined breaks up into other men's voices and somehow disappears, is only one aspect of the poem. It is to be related to the dogmatic uncertainties, the insistent materialism which collapses again and again into a form of idealism, the poetry of fact which is also to be a poetry of ideas, the poetry of words which repeatedly aims itself at silence. In the discussion which follows specific passages from the text will be examined in some detail in order to illumine some of these issues.

The first passage to be considered begins on p.35, "Let the only consistency" and continues to "dodecaphonic bonfire" (p.37). This is the extract which appears in the Grieve and Scott anthology as "In the Fall" (p.271).

> Let the only consistency
> In the course of my poetry
> Be like that of the hawthorn tree...[74]

Immediately we notice that the whole of this passage is an extended symbol or image for poetry itself, cast in the form of what we might call an "epic analogy". When the poem is anthologized, the physical realization is so successful that the substance appears to be a poem about nature, appreciation of which does not necessarily require apprehension of the intellectual significance:

The tree to winter condemned
Stands forth at last
Not bare and drab and pitiful
But a candelabrum or oxidized silver gemmed
By innumerable points of ruby
Which dominate the whole and are visible
Even at a considerable distance
As flame-points of living fire.[75]

This remarkable passage is one of the most physical or visual images in the entire poem, yet while it makes the hawthorn immediate to us it does so through a series of subordinate metaphors which return us to the world of human artifice: "candelabra", "silver", "gemmed", "ruby" (clearly this ruby is cut and polished, not the natural stone). The haws of the hawthorn are metamorphosized into flame, at first the highly controlled flames of the candle which are in turn stilled into the higher art of the ruby, then transformed again into an intenser fire. These intensifying transformations return us to a notion of poetry which transcends the initial position:

That so it may be
With my poems too at last glance
Is my only desire[76]

However, there can be no resting at this stage. The poet rededicates himself to the work. The haws become the poet's "heart's blood", the essence of his life, as poetry is the essence of human life.

See how these haws burn, there down the drive,
In this autumn air that feels like cotton wool,
When the air has the gelatinous limpness of a body dead
as a whole
While its tissues are still alive.[77]

The poem moves out again from the poet, back into the physical Autumn and from there to the whole of humanity. We may note in passing a recurrence of the characteristic so marked in MacDiarmid's earlier lyrics, the ability to move from the minute or immediate particular, to an imaginative, almost palpable apprehension of the world as a whole. We may not before have conceived of the earth as

something flabby and brain-dead, but in these words it becomes so. "Gelatinous limpness" a phrase emotively effective in its repulsiveness is reinforced by the qualification which tells us that the death described is not complete, hence there has been no inset of rigor mortis as we might expect.

There follows one of those singularly ruthless and uncompromising statements which we must accept as being the voice of MacDiarmid, the poet inside the poem, man struggling to become superman. Otherwise, they may strike us as totally unsympathetic, because they make inhuman demands which we, as yet unregenerate, are unable to respond to . The notion of human regeneration and the emergence of the superman is a founding myth of the poem which must be understood in the light of MacDiarmid's political beliefs:

> Poetry is human existence come to life,
> The glorious energy that once employed
> Turns all else in creation null and void,
> The flower and fruit, the meaning and goal,
> Which won all else is needs removed by the knife
> Even as a man who climbs up high
> Kicks away the ladder he has come up by.[78]

The poet seeks an art which will not be an escape from life, but a redemption of life, the intensification of living, "the narrowing intensity" which we apprehend more readily through the already established association with the flame-like haws "sweetened and polished by the frost". This intensity of life will be that of a unified poetic sensibility and the poetry imitates this aim in a daring image which unites the physical and ideal, the emotional and the intellectual and at the same time exploits the devices of rhythm and incantation:

> I who am infinitely more un-English than you (Yeats)
> And turn Scotland to poetry like those women who
> In their passion secrete and turn to
> Musk through and through.[79]

However, the ultimate union can only be projected; in the meantime the poet recognizes his fellows on the "aonach";[80]

he invokes the presence in the poem of those who like Yeats and Joyce have advanced above the ruck because of their vision. Thus he returns us to a forest which is more than ever a literary one - the Caledonian forest, a place made out of words. The highly aureate description which follows is not an attempt to produce a fresh and faithful picture of nature, but to regenerate language, to use and redeploy the clichés of Nature Notes columns, so that they appear no more and no less hackneyed than the stock epithets of epic. So this phase of the poem performs, not a circle which would be closed, but a spiral, or a loop in the snake whereby we move from a simile where objects of nature seem to illunine the concepts of poetry to a fusion where nature and poetry become one, in the world of words.

One of the major strengths of this passage lies in the skilled handling of metrics, which is based on quantity rather than accent. The effect is to provide a firm but not easily identifiable control for the verse, a movement which is not really English, but cannot be attributed fully to any other language. Again, this is a movement towards synthesis, towards the world language.

Through his own mode of quantitative verse MacDiarmid can accommodate a vast number of syllables or juxtaposed stresses in a manner which would be impossible in traditional English metres or indeed in much free verse. Of course, this is not quantitative verse in the classical mode; rather, MacDiarmid is using the concept of quantitative scansion to pattern the stresses of English (or Scottish) intonation. Thus he produces his synthesis, a verse which is not classical, nor English, Scots nor even Gaelic, but which derives features from a number of traditions of poetics. Similarly, MacDiarmid uses rhyme, rhyme schemes and all the devices of assonance to suit his own purposes. Where quantitative notions are concerned, Pound may well have been an influence, through, for instance, his essays or How to Read. MacDiarmid was familiar with and an admirer of Pound's work which he

frequently quotes. Both were associated with Orage's New Age: both were Douglasites. MacDiarmid has a typically idiosyncratic statement of his own on quantity in the essay "Charles Doughty and the Need for Heroic Poetry":

> {Wagner} knew (as Charles Doughty knew) that we were coming to another of the quantitative - as against accentual - periods in culture. It is that lack of historical knowledge which disables no Marxist that is wrong with our mere impressionist commentators on such a phenomenon. It is this question of quantity as against accent that distorts to most Scots the nature of our pibrochs of the great period. These knew no "bar". They were timeless music - hence their affiliation with plainsong, with the neuma. Barred music - accented music - finds its ultimate form in symphony. Unbarred music - quantity music - expresses itself in pattern-repetition; hence the idea that the Celt has no architectonic power, that his art is confined to niggling involutions and intricacies - yet the ultimate form here is not symphony; it is epic.[81]

These remarks could be taken as an oblique commentary on MacDiarmid's own poetry.

Much more could be said about this first passage, but in the meantime it is worth pointing out how the last few lines return us to the idea, to the intellectual concept:

> Other masters may conceivably write
> Even yet in C major.
> But we - we take the perhaps 'primrose path'
> To the dodecaphonic bonfire.[82]

These four lines almost epitomize the effort of the poem; the analogy is with Schonberg and the pioneers of the twelve-tone scale. Incomprehension, distaste, disaster are to be risked for the sake of realizing the idea, the new form which is first of all an intellectual or conceptual advance. Thus we have the uncertainties of 'primrose path' which clangs like a flat note, and the ambiguous success of "dodecaphonic bonfire" where an extraordinary discord of sound and image discloses new possibilities for poetry which have not hitherto been recognized.

II

The passage discussed above has shown how the analytic or intellectual device of simile may be transformed in its working out to something much closer to the radical fusion of metaphor; the world of the forest became an image for the world of words, the world of words images the world of the forest till word and thing become one in the creative process of the poem. Another example of extended analogy, less beguiling but less obscured than the extravagant sylvanism of the previous extract is found in the final section of the third poem, "The Snares of Varuna" (pp.103-112) now to be considered. Varuna is a Hindu god, Lord of the West, of water and morality. His role is similar to that of the Iranian Mithras and he seems in this poem to symbolize the physical entanglements of the spirit as well as the ordering and restrictive powers of received thought. He does not appear in the poem; his name is used as a word symbol to invoke all the connotations of the god who has, however, no substantial role in the poem.

"The Snares of Varuna" is an examination of the evil in the world, but the theme is implicit and ambiguous. It opens (p.103) with a declamation, an intemperate roar reminiscent of Old Testament prophecy, Presbyterian pulpit oratory, or even Pound's Dantean Hell in the Cantos. But the evils are real and urgent, and as the poet lists apparently more trivial wrongs with the worst excesses of Nazism we are convinced of a pervasive ugliness and chaos, disguised by the imposition of a mechanical and authoritarian order:

> The countless thuggeries of Jacks-in-office
> The vile society women, infernal parasites,
> The endless sadism, Gorilla-rule,
> The live men hanging in the plaza
> With butcher's hooks through their jaws[83]

Yet the poet recognizes that this horror, the Fascist terror, class oppression, economic deprivation, make only one aspect of a structure which degenerate man requires to live:

> But if, as could be, ninety per cent
> Of human drudgery were abolished tomorrow
> And the great masses of mankind given
> Ample incomes, and freed for 'higher things'
> They could no more live than fish out of water,
> They could not sustain life on that level
> -On any level worthy of Man at all[84]

Many run the risk of losing his intelligence through atrophy; barbarism is returning and mankind faces extinction. He returns to the revelation of violence masquerading as law and order, dehumanisation increasing with the advance of bureaucracy:

> More and redder tape
> In every phase of life.
> But everywhere.[85]

Then with one of those sudden and elliptic contrasts which bewilder the unprepared reader, the poet moves to a celebration of the individual, the particular which resists classification and pressure to conform. Variety and change are celebrated in men and in the natural world, and the paradox is revealed of universality achieved through the greatest intensification of the individual and the particular - "to the Nth degree".

There follows a passage which seems totally unconnected and, indeed, is placed within a not very effective parenthesis. It begins:

> (And in a poem like this, of course
> Dealing with Plato and the East,
> One must range the library
> Of an Epicurean contemporary of Cicero[86]

Two clues help us to ascertain the relation of this passage to the whole. First, there is a suggestion that the Alexandrian Library is only one area of literature, one part of the world of words which the poet has travelled. We recognize that much of the material for this poem does not come from hospitals, market-places, farmyards or moorlands but rather from periodicals and books: "as Leonard Woolf has said", "It is pleasant to find the books/describing it as very local", "the masterly work of Rudolf Hirzel". The actors in this piece are mostly

writers or artists, scholars and poets with one musician. A footnote (p.107) reveals the source of the passage above as itself a scholarly work: The Alexandrian Library by Edward Alexander Parsons (London, 1952).

Secondly, this passage introduces the East, the unknown, at once the counterpart of and escape from Varuna, Lord of the West. But what we consider as belonging to the East is at the same time part of all of us and is mysterious or even potentially evil if we do not make it conscious. It lies behind the "mysticism" of Plato and even the metaphysics of Aristotle. The mistake of Western philosophy, it is suggested, is to attempt to clarify the mystery by defining it. Thurman Arnold is quoted

> Definition is ordinarily supposed
> To produce clarity of thinking.
> It is not generally recognized
> That the more we define our terms
> The less descriptive they become
> And the more difficulty we have in using them.[87]

MacDiarmid's approach is different, oblique. Through a succession of similes, often with multiple references he seeks to capture or "land" the multi-faceted mystery. This mystery can only be discovered through words, but the conventional logical deployment of words is inadequate. More devious means are used: similes and images are juxtaposed, apparent non-sequiturs have alogical or associational links which weave a net to trap the truth.

The poet has told us that Aristotle and Plato were deluded in regarding logic and epistemology as the keys which would make all things clear. It seems the superficial clarity and apparency of nature is deceptive and now we move into the simile, or rather, analogy, which is to illustrate this point

> Hence it is here to the Nth degree
> As it is with Mozart...[88]

But no sooner is Mozart introduced than his work is subjected to analogy in its turn:

> They have felt certain Mozart masterpieces
> As one would feel a still,bright,perfect,cloudless day.
> ...
> It is infinitely protean
> It is intangible, immaterial,
> Fitting your spirit like a glove.
> Then suddenly there will pass through you a tremor of terror.
> A moment comes when that tranquillity,
> That perfection take on a ghastly ambiguity.
> That music still suggests nothing, nothing at all.[89]

We turn from this to a portrait of Mozart "with a too-prominent nose/And an extraordinary salience of the upper lip" from which we experience a fleeting revelation, but are:

> left face to face with a mask
> Whose directness and clarity is completely baffling.[90]

The apprehensions of terror and evil are the more terrifying and the more evil because they are nothing; the unknown reality is only unknown because we do not realize that there is nothing beyond what we do know. None of the similes which succeed and qualify each other is more real than another; there is no hidden referent towards which they all point. There are sunny days, there are works by Mozart, there are even similarities between them. They are all real, they all exist and play their part.

The paragraph ends with a further bafflement, a new association which disorients even more thoroughly our sense of the level of reality:

> Pushkin's Salieri who wanted
> To poison Mozart was right.
> He should have poisoned Pushkin too[91]

How can a character poison his author? Quite easily, if they are all inside the same book. Mozart is dangerous, Pushkin is dangerous, MacDiarmid must be dangerous. And why? Because they show us that appearances are real, that they are effective, and that the sum of things is all there is. There is no "something I never mention"[92] except in so far as the poem or catalogue cannot be completed. The metaphor is the reality, it is the words of

the poem and the words of the poem are real and refer to other things which are real, though they may belong to different orders of reality - a portrait, symphony, a clear day, even a "ghastly ambiguity" for relationships and perceptions of relationships and feelings are also real.

> A language is
> A form of life; but there are many forms of life.[93]

The next section, referring to the German poet, Stifter, comes from the Times Literary Supplement of August 15th, 1952, from an article "Growth and Consummation" which is a review of books about Stifter, including the two MacDiarmid mentions in his footnote. Like the Karl Kraus passage, it would seem therefore to be a late addition to the main body of the poem. Again we notice that there is no direct sequential thread; rather this section goes off at a tangent on the theme of the demonic "behind the idyllic facade".

> Stifter, trying to eliminate all
> The demonic elements from his world
> And substitute for them the Sanftes Gesetz des Seins
> Only to have the demonic reenter his work
> In the subtle and uncanny disguise
> Of simplicity and innocence.[94]

The original passage read:

> He speaks, for instance, of Stifter's dread of the demonic, of how he tried to eliminate all demonic elements from his world, and to substitute for them the Sanftes Gesetz des Seins. The critic seems to have overlooked the fact, that in a hidden form, the demonic enters into a number of Stifter's characters in the subtle and uncanny disguise of simplicity and innocence.

We should notice how MacDiarmid has shifted the emphasis, by the slightest alteration of wording, to suggest that it is Stifter, rather than the critic, who is unaware of the presence and power of the demonic.

In some respects MacDiarmid may be disingenuous about his sources, but he makes very little attempt to cover his tracks. In fact, he provides a gloss on his own technique in an early play, The Purple Patch.[95]

The subject is a hell-fire sermon from a new minister which thoroughly stirs the congregation. However, the beadle provides the denouement, revealing it to be plagiarized from the previous incumbent, who in turn had taken it from the work of "Dr. Donne". Furthermore, in Lucky Poet, discussing his exile on Whalsay, MacDiarmid cites with admiration the case of Tom Mooney who kept himself informed while in prison by "reading his paper thoroughly, cover to cover, and by having a good enough background before he went inside". (p.xviii)

It is often comparatively simple to uncover MacDiarmid's sources. More interesting is what becomes of them in the poem. In the section quoted above several lines are taken verbatim from the article, though the passage as a whole has been modified to some extent, cut down and otherwise adapted to the movement of the verse. However, no matter how little MacDiarmid alters his sources, "the method is his ain"; [96] the words of others are appropriated by the poet and repeated in his voice. This is achieved in part by a certain uniformity in the verse. In these long prosy passages, the normative line approximates to a rough tetrameter, the measure which is probably closest to natural speech rhythms and is so common in ballad and folk poetry. One need not claim that MacDiarmid's long passages of "chopped-up prose" have metrical felicities hitherto unnoticed; but he uses the arrangements of his lines to point up the innate rhythms of prose, the subtle music in all assemblages of words which may exist even apart from their meaning. In the paragraph on fishing, the hackneyed clichés and technicalities of specialist journalism achieve a startling success in their new setting:

> It requires 'iron nerves' for all fishermen
> English or others, to hold their hands
> When the nose of a great four-pounder
> Slowly rises to the fly.[97]

Again, we recognize that words are the primary reality of the poem; "iron nerves" is a cliché, so much is acknowledged by the quotation marks, which have the effect of

turning it into a unit or complex word. But here it is simply a word, interacting with other words, as it happens, chiming with "requires", just as "fishermen" does with "English". It is shorn of all need to appear as a metaphorical event; there is no attempt to restore a tension of meaning, to stimulate connotations; the figurative meaning is taken so much for granted that it has become literal. MacDiarmid often uses the non-creative, or rational, devices of simile and "dead", therefore accepted and "literal" metaphor, and by thus exploiting a convention enacts a more subtle and radically creative process. We notice how the literalness of language emphasizes again and again the theme of "nothing there", of appearances, what is seen, no matter how superficial, being all that there is. This may seem to be a contradiction of the content of the passage which concerns the raising of the mystery from the depths, a mystery which changes from the familiar British trout and salmon through the pages of the natural history books to a Zambesi crocodile, dorado, tiger-fish shark, until eventually it reaches its consummation as Moby Dick. However, this mysterious quarry is raised not from darkness but from clear water. "Clarity" provides one of the connections which knits this passage to the Mozart section: the cloudless day, the clarity of the Mozart masterpiece, the "gin" clearness of the chalk streams are equivalents, and the demonic element is to be identified with that which lay behind Stifter's "idyllic facade".

The poet of In Memoriam James Joyce is optimistic, he looks to the future, he has a vision of world language and regenerate man. If such optimism is not to be shallow, it must confront the problem of evil, as MacDiarmid does here. What the poem demonstrates, rather than states, is that evil is negative, it is ignorance, lack of knowledge, privatio boni. This accords very well with other statements by the poet, particularly in "The Kind of Poetry I Want", but here the poet as teacher

makes us learn for ourselves, makes us construct our own meaning, our own knowledge from the meshed but unconstrued data.

Thus what is evil is what we do not know, or cannot know, what we do not or cannot see. Evil is human and subjective, a failure of consciousness. It is our ignorance, what we lack. As it exists objectively it is neither good nor evil, but as it is unknown it does not exist subjectively; for us it is nothingness. Stifter (in MacDiarmid's version) refused to admit the demonic, refused to see what objectively was there; the evil was his failure of consciousness, his unwillingness to fish the monster from the clear depths. Knowledge and vision demand this action; the subject must work to create the mystery which he reveals. The poet does this by naming, acknowledging, making conscious all that he touches, all the relationships he perceives. The poem is "a vast metaphor for something I never mention". That something is nothing, the unknown, the unnameable, which is always implied by that which has been named, and is only that which has not yet been named, or known.

III

Reinforcement of these suggestions may be discovered in the third passage to be considered, the address to Speech as the means to self-transcendence and higher consciousness. She

> Rouses that by which, through the deceits of their emotions
> Men reach out to those things which are beyond their grasp
> -The embodiment of every vital desire
> That gives them consciousness of being.[98]

It would be to falsify the poem to suggest that this passage corresponds exactly to the one discussed above. Each passage names a part of reality, is part of the poem, but these parts are not identical or even necessarily consistent, though there may be similarities between them. If one of the aspects of the poem could be interpreted completely through another it would suggest that

one of the two aspects was more "real" or more valuable than the other.

This section opens with a direct address to Speech, personified or hypostasized. The form recalls again O'Rathaille's aislin, or vision poem, where the beloved is occupied Ireland.

Speech. All men's whore. My beloved![99]

An earlier version of this spoiled beauty appears in A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle:

> And on my lips ye'll heed nae mair
> And in my hair forget
> The seed o' a' the men that in
> My virgin womb ha'e met.[100]

This mysterious woman also appears as Sophia, the whore of God, female person of the Deity who figures so prominently in some forms of Gnosticism and Cabbalism. "She" is not a real woman, nor is she simply speech or language: she is the object and lure of MacDiarmid's passion, made manifest as Scotland, poetry, knowledge, the earth, a loving woman.

She, Audh, the Celtic Muse, is the power of poetry, the power of knowledge to entice a man beyond himself. A "femme fatale" who is herself beyond the common and so hated by the herd, she inspires her lovers to superhuman deeds. She is, though a member of the Godhead, of the Devil's party in respect of most orthodox religions. Not only does she encourage man in his own aspirations towards divinity, the way she provides is made out of emotions, sexual desire and deceits. But through this vision man is exalted to a higher one:

> Not lust but exhilaration
> They are roused to exalted visions of themselves[101]

The next paragraph moves on to this higher plane, where the vision of love transcends the physical and seems to be moving towards the hermaphroditic union which is one of the higher alchemical stages and the penultimate step before Godhood:

-an absorbing attachment of the spirit,
Not a sexual relationship as that is generally understood
But an all-controlling emotion
That has no physical basis.[102]

As the conception of love develops, the figure of the woman takes on a new dignity and impersonality. All the lustiness of the first paragraph disappears; she is likened to the "snowcap on a mountain"... She becomes the personification of Love, but at the same time her struggle is dramatized so that she becomes again a human woman:

Death cannot intimidate her,
Poverty and exile, the fury of her own family
And the calumnies of the world
Are unable to bend her will
Towards courses she feels to be wrong.[103]

We are reminded of MacDiarmid's constant search for the universal in the particular. Here his imagination moves from the intellectual abstraction to a particular dramatic situation, and then out again to a vision of Love as the World-Spirit, where world and spirit, matter and mind, intellect and emotion, are thoroughly fused.

-Imparting with every movement, every look
Some idea of what the process of literature could be,
Something far more closely related
To the whole life of mankind
Than the science of stringing words together
In desirable sequences.[104]

These words tell us the poet's vision without wholly capturing or presenting it, so that the fusion is not achieved but still only projected. The gap between aspiration of this order and achievement can only be bridged in a transcendent moment, if at all, yet consciousness of the gap generates more and more poetry. The alternative is despair and silence, which is the only rational course if resolution is to be taken as the supreme goal, rather than as the lure of process. If process in itself is valued, the battle against nothingness becomes heroic. We might compare the conclusion of A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle:

For ainœ it's toomed my hert and brain,
The thistle needs maun fa' again.
But a' its growth'll never fill
The hole it's turned my life intil!
Yet ha'e I Silence left, the croon o'a'.

and then, with particular relevance for the later poem:

No' her, wha on the hills langsyne I saw
Liftin' a foreheid o' perpetual snaw.
... ...
- But Him whom nocht in man or Deity,
Or Daith or Dreid or Laneliness can touch,
Wha's deed owre often and has seen owre much.
O I ha'e Silence left[105]

This unnamed figure is everything which has been named, the Man who comprehends male and female, the silence which is nothing and the poetntial of all words, the process and flux which is eternal and unchanging. The "Silence" of A Drunk Man also governs In Memoriam James Joyce and indeed the whole of the poet's work. Its importance is shown by one incident in the Karl Kraus passage, which has been recognized as a quotation from the Times Literary Supplement. At one point MacDiarmid breaks from the quotation:

Then Holderlin sought,
And often miraculously found
The word with which silence speaks
Its own silence without breaking it.[106]

In the original prose this reads: "The word with which anguish speaks its own silence without breaking it". MacDiarmid has heightened the poetry and emphasized the importance of silence by a single repetition; significantly this heightening of tension is followed by a break from the Kraus text and the insertion of the medical analogy which has been admired by Morgan and Buthlay:[107]

(Silence supervening at poetry's height,
Like the haemolytic streptococcus
In the sore throat preceding rheumatic fever
But which, at the height of the sickness,
Is no longer there, but has been and gone.[108]

This silence is at once the terrifying void of chaos which threatens all life and at the same time the source or reservoir of all creation; in language, the potential of all words.

IV

To live is to be at war, and language is the field of battle. Hence the ferocity, even frenzy, with which MacDiarmid seeks to catalogue all the words, all the facts. If they are not known, not spoken, they will not exist. Human intelligence will atrophy, humanity become extinct. This returns us to the notion of the immorality of exclusiion or the problem of the catalogue. As an example of this at its most extreme we may consider a section of the "The World of Words" which reads like a nineteen thirties bibliography on physiological and psychological aspects of art, linguistics, and stylistics. Sometimes we are given a little more than the bare title but this leaves us little the wiser:

> Pluss's 'Das Gleichnis in Erzahlen der Dichtung',
> Which concludes that the value and purpose of a poetic comparison
> Are not to be found in the arousal of a visual image
> But in the creation of a 'Gesamtvorstellung'
> Common to both the principal and subordinate object.
> Muller-Freienfels's 'Psychologie der Kunst',
> Bullough on 'Psychical Distance',
> And are learned in all manner of hypnagogic images,
> Verbal reflexes, visual onomatopoeia,
> Word-physiognomy, colour associations, tactile values,
> The psychological experiences differ ciating
> Noun-consciousness from verb-consciousness,
> And the adjective state of mind from the adverb.[109]

And so it goes on.

Here MacDiarmid seems to be carrying to its utmost and most scientific or technical extreme, Ezra Pound's requirement that the poet study his craft. There is some sort of syntactical or punctuational confusion in the eighth line of this extract which suggests that even the poet has been overwhelmed by the mass of his material. However, the projected poet, the articulator of fully achieved consciousness would have full control and understanding of this body of knowledge. As it stands, the catalogue cannot tell us very much, nor does it present a coherent argument. We do not even believe that MacDiarmid himself has read all these works. But still,

the attempt has been made; a reading list has been given, access to an important part of knowledge has been opened, a direction has been given to whomsoever would take up the task of the poet.

V

In striking contrast to the previous passage, let us turn to short section from the early part of the poem, a passage which follows the "Let the only consistency" extract which was the first to be discussed. In that extract we were led into a new world, neither an actual physical forest nor the abstract forest of language, but a fusion of the physical and intellectual ideas on the poem which is truly metaphorical. These last two paragraphs, paradoxically, are able to emphasize the sensational aspects of this experience through gleanings of unfamiliar vocabulary from technical and dialect dictionaries:

> The gold edging of a bough at sunset, its pantile way
> Forming a double curve, tegula and imbrex in one,
> Seems at times a movement on which I might be borne
> Happily to infinity; but again I am glad
> When it suddenly ceases and I find myself
> Pursuing no longer a rhythm of duramen
> But bouncing on the diploe in a clearing between earth and air
> Or headlong in dewy dallops or a moon-spairged fernshaw
> Or caught in a dark dumosity, or even
> In opening country again watching an aching spargosis of stars.[110]

I append a glossary:

pantile	A roofing tile curved to an ogee shape, one curve being much longer than the other. When laid on the roof the greater part of their surface forms a concave channel for the descent of water, while one side forms a narrow convex ridge, which overlaps the edge of the adjoining tile. (The Longniddry cottage where MacDiarmid lived for a time in 1932 was pantiled.)
tegula	a) A small scale-like structure covering the base of the forewing in hymenopterous and other insects. b) Each of a pair of membranous scales (prehalteres) in front of the halteres in dipterous insects.

imbrex	A curved roof-tile (Archaeol.) Also associated with Latin, imbrex, rain shower.
duramen	The central or heartwood of an exogenous tree.
diploe	a) Anat. The light porous or cancellated bone-tissue lying between the hard dense inner and outer layer of the bones of the skull. b) That part of the parenchyme of a leaf which intervenes between two layers of epiderm.
dallop (dollop)	clump of grass or weeds in a field (but see below)
moon-spairged	moon-sprinkled
dumosity	Full of bushes, **thorns**. 1656, Blount; "that hath many or is full of Brambles or Bryers"
spargosis	Path. (or sparganosis) distension of breasts occasioned by too much milk

We notice that in this passage there is no priority given to Scottish dialect; technical vocabulary and archaic English forms are equally favoured. Thus "moon-spairged" is certainly Scottish, but "dallop" while it may be Scots, a variation on "doolloup" meaning a glen or hollow between two areas of low-lying flat ground, more probably, in the context, is a variant of "dollop", meaning "clump of grass of weeds in a field". This occurs in Scots and English dialect and is conjectured to be Norwegian in origin.

I have spent so much time on this point because it reveals the extent to which it is necessary to translate MacDiarmid. This is a consistent feature of his poetry from the first lyrics in Scots. We forget too easily that the Lallans or "synthetic Scots" of MacDiarmid's poetry must be nearly as unfamiliar to most Scots as to anyone else. Indeed, part of its value for MacDiarmid is its very strangeness, despite its foundation in the intimate language of his childhood.

One quality comes through again and again in MacDiarmid's poetry: the love of and delight in words, words as words. Very often his images are verbal and intellectual rather than visual or sensual. Thus, if we seek some sort of physical nub or orientation for the associations and connotations in this work we may be bewildered; for very often the idea or the word itself is the central reality. In the passage under consideration the sensual and verbal elements enhance each other so that despite the latinisms and poly-syllables we have an impression of the poet as an Ariel or Puck-like figure disporting himself in the magical Caledonian forest. So, on the first impressionistic reading the passage is successful, appealing. However, its strangeness demands considerable effort if we are actually to understand what is being said, for unless we take the extreme view that poetry should not be intelligible, only musical, this writing forces on us the sort of detailed exegesis used in medieval scholarship or modern paractical criticism. In this way it obstructs the superficial reading habits which a too casual literacy encourages. The reader is forced to interpret and so participate in the creation of the poem.[111] He must find a satisfactory reading to account for "tegula" and "imbrex"; he must himself provide whatever sense there may be in "rhythm of duramen". The author has absconded, removing himself from judgement and leaving us with the proper object of investigation, the poetic text.

This insistence on the intrinsic value of words is also manifested in the collector's obsession with lexical curiosities; archaisms, "hapax legomena", dialect words etc. If these words are known to the poet he must attempt to propagate them. Every word represents a realization of an aspect of human experience, a nuance which cannot otherwise be articulated. The loss of a word is therefore the loss of an awareness of the human experience,

no matter how subtle or slight this might seem to be. MacDiarmid is searching for precision, particularity and he praised these qualities in other writers. Doughty is applauded for

> Making language at once richer and more precise
> And passionate for naming particular things [112]

Yet though MacDiarmid insists on variety and exactness of vocabulary, he also speaks sometimes as if there were one word, the Logos or Omnific Word, which, if uttered, would name everything. This word is to be identified with the great work, the "supreme fiction" whose attainment, we have seen, the poet admits is impossible for the individual "We know that total speech is impossible of course".[113] Still "we must know all the words".[114] In order to reach towards the Logos, or to recreate its unity, all the separate constituents must be gathered and spoken, even the secret languages, such as that of Meredith:

> Uttering a secret language as if in the belief
> That it was a universal speech, yet even if
> A secret language it contains a body
> Of thought and intuitions worth unravelling[114]

Every word, no matter how local or specialized its use, is also universal, a part of the universal language; again exclusion is loss.

We must now consider the themes and problems of this whole poetic enterprise which have emerged from the examination of specific passages.

First, the problem of exclusion. The poet in this work is the servant of language and of man. He must preserve and articulate or make available for the men of his own time the whole body of human knowledge. This entails inclusion, not only all the words but also all the arrangements of words. It means that all sorts of details which might seem irrelevant to the central theme must be included, for they are part of the world. To omit anything might be to forfeit the possibility of man's redemptions:

> There lie hidden in language elements that effectively combined
> Can utterly change the nature of man[115]

Everything goes in, especially contradictions. This may explain MacDiarmid's repetitiveness and his excessive use of unwieldy quotations. If words are used exactly every different way of expressing an idea is a further revelation of it. Similarly, to end or cut a quotation is to exclude a consideration which its author thought important and is to risk falsifying evidence. Such scruples, awkward in poetry are familiar, indeed laudable, in the historian. Another device which can puzzle and infuriate is to provide all the material which seems, even tangentially, to be related to the idea the poet is striving to articulate, e.g. "The Snares of Varuna" where a number of very different elements revolve around certain implicit recurring themes and images such as demonism, fishing and clarity. In this poem, after the original bafflement, it seems to me that we do find the different elements relating to each other and producing a new meaning.

There are ways of avoiding the endless catalogue. One, imposed by the poet's limitations, is to give a bibliography directing the reader to sources of knowledge which would otherwise have to be printed inside the poem. Another, more creative and more dangerous, is synthesis. When this occurs in In Memoriam James Joyce, we have the passages which delight us and persuade us to continue with the rest of the poem. One example, already cited, is the alteration of the Holderlin passage and the following interpolation. Another might be the marrying of Busoni's Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music[116] with O'Rathaille's "Gile na Gile" which is almost the leit motiv of MacDiarmid's Gaelic material:

> And beauty - but there! Oh, Aodhagan O'Rathaille meets again
> The Brightness of Brightness in a lonely glen
> And sees the hair that's plaited
> Like the generations of men.[117]

Synthesis requires a confidence which despite MacDiarmid's apparent arrogance is surprisingly rare in his poetry. The fear that he might be overlooking or rejecting an essential element always counterbalances

the desire for higher organization and more complex life which is the only answer to chaos.

> A poetry like pronouncing the Shemporesh
> Unremitting, relentless
> Organised to the last degree
> (If I have evolved myself out of something
> Like an amphioxis, it is clear
> I have become <u>better</u> by the change,
> I have risen in the organic scale,
> I have become more organic[118]

This brings us to the view that art, and in particular, poetry as the consummation of language and art, is both the weapon and the proudest manifestation of order and structure against disorder and chaos. Chaos is at once the womb of matter out of which all structures are reared and at the same time the tomb of oblivion which engulfs whatever is forgotten, disorganized or even static:

> I may end here by saying that what the Scottish people need above all today to realize is that (in keeping with all that is really valuable in their past) static adherence to any particular methodology marks the decline of civilization, for the temporal character of the universe decrees that the only alternative to advance is decay; and the function of philosophy, as Professor Whitehead says, is to uphold the zest of life by the provision of novel goals of achievement; stupefaction before any particular methodology is that failure in adequacy which is the self-negation of philosophy and the betrayal of the future. The aim of philosophy is the understanding of the interfusion of modes of existence.[119]

MacDiarmid does not always quote Whitehead with such unqualified approval, but it must surely be in terms of a philosophy of process, such as that of Whitehead, that MacDiarmid's poetic enterprise is to be understood.

In his doctoral thesis,[120] R.B. Watson has shown that MacDiarmid's work may be placed in a philosophical framework of the tradition which developed from Hegel through Whitehead, Croce and Bergson - the philosophers of process. He quotes Bosanquet's argument that such philosophies find room for complementary elements of realism and idealism, and points out that these are all philosophers

with systems, systems which are relevant to life and culture, features which make them particularly attractive to poets with universal aspirations, whether political or religious.

In a letter to Helen Burns Cruikshank, MacDiarmid compares Mature Art, which seems to have been the prototype for In Memoriam James Joyce, to Circumjack Cencrastus, claiming that it deals with "essentially the same themes". These themes he has already described as "The pursuit of World Consciousness":

> Our unique gift as human beings is the power to think (the great function almost everybody has all along evaded) and it is only by a realization and acceptance of that that we can give our love the necessary fullness and guidance. In Russian religious thought (e.g. in Soloviev) man's destiny is through his consciousness to reconcile the lower orders of creation - animals, plants, minerals to St. Sophia, the Wisdom of God, who is the female hypostasis of the Deity. My poem envisages that reconcillation (and insists upon the part Scotland should, can and must play in that great task) in purely intellectual, i.e. in non-mystical and non-religious terms.[121]

This reconciliation is the lure which encourages the poem and prevents its completion. The poet is an instrument through which a greater degree of world consciousness can be achieved. He serves the World Language, the Logos, which in its temporal form is imperfectly and partially realized, while in its eternal, primordial and ultimate form is complete, unified,but unreal. Every poem, every piece of knowledge implies the whole of human culture; in the reality of the instant they are simultaneous and the product of a unitary consciousness, so that chronology of composition and individual authorship become irrelevant. The poet is a servant rather than a master of language and thus in the poem adopts a priest-like role in relation to the ultimate, the Poem of poems which is also the Great Music:

All the knowledge is woven neatly
So that the plaited ends come to the hand.
Pull any of the tabs, and a sequence
Of practical information is drawn.

Each sound is the centre of endless circles,
And now the harmony opens out before you
Innumerable are its voices, compared with which
The boom of the harp is a screeching,
The clash of a thousand trumpets a twitter [122]

In this vision of the Great Music we are aware of the interdependence and interaction of all events in space and time. Poetry aspires towards the condition of music, not through an abdication of sense, but a transcendence whereby the realization or articulation of all languages and vocabularies will bring about the reunified and undifferentiated Word.

The poem attempts through its pursuit of language to "circumjack" the principle of Life. If this total work, the ultimate poem of world consciousness were achieved it would resolve all the flaws or inadequacies of individual writings. However, the poem can only be real in its process; completion, while it is the lure can never be achieved. The greater its achievements, its syntheses, its projection for the world, the wider is the gap between the poem and the totality of existence.

The poet is the victim of the paradoxes he wields, the extremes between which he weaves his poem. On the one hand there is the delight in the variety of the world as it is, and the realization that nothing else is; on the other, there is the moral will, the urge to improve what is wrong, to raise the world to a higher level of existence. This conflict between what is and what ought to be is one aspect of the central paradox of One and Many which generates the process of the poem:

finding no intellectual solution
For this notorious conflict
Between the intellectual love of the universe as it is
And the moral will that it should be other,
Concluding that perhaps the only solution
Lies in the faith, or the mystical perception,
That the welter of frustration in the parts
Is instrumental to some loftier perfection
In the universe as a whole.

Ah! no, no! Intolerable end
To one who set out to be independent of faith
And of mystical perception.
    It does not after all seem certain
That the peace I have found is entirely
Free from mystical elements. Have I found
No salvation but only Santayana again.[123]

Again we encounter MacDiarmid's disconcerting sense of humour. David Daiches has written perceptively on the comic force of the poet's work[124] and certainly the vis comica was one of the qualities MacDiarmid valued most in Joyce, and it was a quality he discerned in his own gold-mine, Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary. Perhaps part of our difficulty with this poet is occasioned by a failure to realize just how funny he is, to realize that it is possible to be both funny and desperately serious, to be funny without being ironic. The passage I have quoted is intrinsically funny; its comedy is the comedy of human existence.

In Memoriam James Joyce is a poem dedicated to language; words can create ideas and possibilities to be realized in the physical world. Mentality, thought, vision are valued above the actual but words are the only bridge between them. Words are catalogued, juggled and celebrated in all their variety in this poem, both for themselves and for what they offer mankind. As the words of the poem come before any things to which they refer so the text of the poem comes before any author or authors. Proprietary rights are insignificant in comaprison with the interrelation of various sections and passages of the poem on the actual text. In this sense, the extended quotations could be considered as "extended words" and so available for general use. If something has been said in one way, that expression is the "exact word" the poet must use if he chooses to include that element of experience in his work. And, as we have seen, by what may be called the "principle of the immorality of exclusion" any experience perceived must be reproduced, unless it can be synthesized into a higher form of experience. The purpose of the poem

is to be the spearhead of life, organization, complex order; it is the vigilance and vision which increases the consciousness and order, apart from which there is nothing, the unknown, unconsciousness and chaos.

Although A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle may well be, as a separate work and by conventional criteria, a greater poem than In Memoriam James Joyce, nevertheless the later poem must be seen as a natural development and continuation of the earlier work. It does provide new goals for poetry, set up new tasks of comprehension and conception which have been too easily parcelled out to religion and philosophy and so neutralized. For MacDiarmid, poetry, the consummation of language, becomes the keystone of knowledge. But the secret of this poetry is unending dissatisfaction, the rejection of all solutions, all answers, including the rejection of "process" itself, is regarded as an answer rather than a way.

In Memoriam James Joyce seems to me a representative volume of a noble undertaking which can only be compared with work by writers such as Joyce, and, whether MacDiarmid likes it or not, with work by the younger American poets such as Charles Olson and Robert Duncan. In it we move from the concept of art which provides access to reality, completely removed and other from life and action. This was the art ideal of T.E. Hulme, Wyndham Lewis and even Ezra Pound. Such an ideal involves selection and exclusion and is therefore anti-democratic and also irrational because although it seeks the imposition of order, "ratio", it depends on intuition rather than logic or rational discussion. If we do not accept Pound's perception of order or his essentials we are condemned; there is no possibility of dissent,any more than where would be in a Fascist state. In MacDiarmid's work the poem not only has access to the flux, it engages the universe. Thus it remains open, capable of including every point of view, every element of experience. In turning to the poetry of process MacDiarmid forfeits the possibility of completion, the finished work of art;

but he gains the reintegration of art and life, poetry and science or knowledge, enabling us to conceive of a poetry which is the highest, most evolved form of life, and as such the articulator and heightener of human consciousness.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1 Hugh MacDiarmid, Lucky Poet (London, 1943,1972) p.xxiii.

2 Hugh MacDiarmid, In Memoriam James Joyce, hereafter IMJJ (Glasgow, 1955) p.37.

3 Lucky Poet, p.272.

4 Lucky Poet, p.329.

5 Lucky Poet, p.423.

6 Charles Olson, Mayan Letters (London, 1968) pp.26-27.

7 IMJJ, p.28.

8 Lucky Poet, p.81.

9 Lucky Poet, p.91.

10 Lucky Poet, p.283.

11 Lucky Poet, p.237.

12 Lucky Poet, p.237.

13 Anthology, p.287. - see below n. 27

14 Lucky Poet, p.77.

15 Lucky Poet, p.24.

16 Duncan Glen, Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) and the Scottish Renaissance, (Edinburgh, 1964).

17 See "Introductory", Lucky Poet, p.9ff. MacDiarmid mentions here an early acquaintance with the work of W.C. Williams and Gertrude Stein, probably in the late twenties and thirties.

18 Scottish Education Journal, 21st August, 1925.

19 Lucky Poet, p.179. MacDiarmid's apparent conviction that he embodies the will of history leads to these displays of ruthlessness. Volume One of Northern Numbers was dedicated "with affection and pride" to Neil Munro who in Lucky Poet is described as one "for whose own writings either in prose or poetry I had little use, and whose character in relation to Scotland's requirements I condemned before and at the time of his death in flaying articles which gave great offence to his family and all his host of friends."

20 Northern Numbers: First Series (Edinburgh, 1920); Second Series (Edinurgh, 1921); Third Series (Montrose, 1922).

21 Lucky Poet, p.201.

22 George Bruce, The Scottish Literary Revival (London, 1968) p.3.

23 Lucky Poet, p.194

24 The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry, selected and edited by Hugh MacDiarmid, (London, 1948) p.xxi.

25 C.M. Grieve, Albyn, or Scotland and the Future, (London, 1927) p.25.

26 Golden Treasury, p.xxii (Quoting Vocadlo, "Anglo-Saxon Terminology", Studies in English by members of the English Seminar of the Charles University, Prague, Vol.4.

27 The word appears in Hugh MacDiarmid's lyric, "The Watergaw" The Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology, edited by Grieve and Scott. (London, 1972) p.3.

28 Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid, Writers and Critics (Edinburgh, 1964) p.26ff.

29 Lucky Poet, p.193.

30 Albyn, pp.50-51.

31 Albyn, p.36.

32 Buthlay, p.45.

33 Despite his scientific rationalism and materialism, MacDiarmid is widely read in mystic, irrationalist and religious philosophers - Soloviev, Chestov, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Buber - and their influence on his work is pervasive.

34 Buthlay, p.20.

35 Anthology, p.27.

36 Buthlay, p.25.

37 Lucky Poet, p.285.

38 Albyn, p.40.

39 Lucky Poet, p.37.

40 Lucky Poet, p.241.

41 Lucky Poet, pp.260-261.

42 Lucky Poet, p.268.

43 Lucky Poet, p.254.

44 See Buthlay, p.10 and Lucky Poet, p.357.

45 Albyn, p.13.

46 Lucky Poet, p.257.

47 Lucky Poet, p.184.

48 Lucky Poet, p.227.

49 From the policy statement of Viewpoint (1934), later Left Review, quoted in Neal Wood's Communism and British Intellectuals (London, 1959) p.59.

50 John Middleton Murry, The Necessity of Communism (London, 1932) p.51.

51 Lucky Poet, p.51.

52 Hugh MacDiarmid, Metaphysics and Poetry (Hamilton, 1975) n.p.

53 Metaphysics and Poetry

54 Hugh MacDiarmid, The Company I've Kept (London, 1966) p.114.

55 The Company I've Kept, p.120.

56 Lucky Poet, pp.231-232.

57 Lucky Poet, p.17.

58 Helen Cruickshank, "Mainly Domestic" in Hugh MacDiarmid: A festschrift (Edinburgh, 1962) p.193.

59 The Company I've Kept, p.187.

60 David Craig, "MacDiarmid the Marxist Poet" in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Festschrift, p.88.

61 He does look back to Gaelic culture, but admits that its special virtues must form part of the new synthesis rather than simply be restored in their pristine state. See Lucky Poet, p.372.

62 Anthology, p.193.

63 Anthology, p.192-193.

64 Anthology, p.194.

65 IMJJ, p.52.

66 Anthology, p.194-195.

67 Craig, p.94.

68 Lucky Poet, p.188.

69 Lucky Poet, p.327.

70 IMJJ, p.25.

71 "Appetition is immediate matter of fact including in itself a principle of unrest, involving realization of what is not and may be". A.N. Whitehead, Process and Reality, Ch.III, S.I.

72 See IMJJ, p.56.

73 Encounter, Vol.8, Np.26. (Nov.1955).

74 IMJJ, p.35.

75 IMJJ, p.36.

76 IMJJ, p.36.

77 IMJJ, p.36.

78 IMJJ, p.36.

79 IMJJ, p.36.

80 A footnote reads "Scottish Gaelic, meaning (1) a solitary place (2) a place of union. cf. Latin: inicus, single; unire, unite - both from unus, one" - IMJJ, p.27.

81 Selected Essays of Hugh MacDiarmid edited by Duncan Glen. (London, 1969) p.75.

82 IMJJ, p.37.

83 IMJJ, p.104.

84 IMJJ, p.104.

85 IMJJ, p.105.

86 IMJJ, p.107.

87 IMJJ, p.109.

88 IMJJ, p.109.

89 IMJJ, p.110.

90 IMJJ, p.110.

91 IMJJ, p.110.

92 "And all this here, everything I write, of course/ Is an extended Metaphor for something I never mention", IMJJ, p.27.

93 IMJJ, p.69.

94 IMJJ, p.110.

95 In The Uncanny Scot, edited by Buthlay (London, 1968) p.72.

96 Uncanny Scot, p.72.

97 IMJJ, p.111.

98 IMJJ, p.101.

99 IMJJ, p.101.

100 Anthology, p.42.

101 IMJJ, p.101.

102 IMJJ, p.101.

103 IMJJ, p.101.

104 IMJJ, p.102.

105 Anthology, p.102.

106 IMJJ, p.47.

107 Kenneth Buthlay, Hugh MacDiarmid, p.106. Edwin Morgan, "Poetry and Knowledge in MacDiarmid's Later Work" in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Festschrift

108 IMJJ, p.47.

109 IMJJ, p.77.

110 IMJJ, p.37.

[111] So, when I looked up "spairge" to confirm its meaning, I found it in the OED under "sparge" from Latin "spargere" to sprinkle. By chance, I discovered that the previous entry was "sparganosis" with a possible variant of "spargosis". I had carelessly assumed that this word also came from "spargere" and was either very unusual or a neologism intended to convey the idea of a sky sprinkled with stars. The juxtaposition of "spairged" and "sparganosis" as well as a knowledge of the Latin root does make this a legitimate secondary meaning. However, the content of the phrase "aching spargosis of stars" is vastly increased when we realize that the night sky is being seen as the breasts of a mother swollen with milk. Of course, this image is reinforced by a number of myths.

[112] IMJJ, p.23.

[113] IMJJ, p.25.

[114] IMJJ, p.23.

[115] IMJJ, p.154.

[116] See "MacDiarmid, Joyce and Busoni" by Ronald Stevenson in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Festschrift.

[117] IMJJ, p.132.

[118] Lucky Poet, p.118.

[119] Lucky Poet, p.154.

[120] R.B. Watson, "A Critical Study of the 'Cencrastus Theme' in the Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid. Flux and Antisyzygy" Unpublished doctoral thesis (Cambridge, 1970).

[121] Cruickshank-Grieve Correspondance. University of Edinburgh. Dated "Feb. 1939. Whalsay. Wed."

[122] IMJJ, p.132.

[123] IMJJ, p.139.

[124] David Daiches, "MacDiarmid's New Poem" in Lines Review, August, 1955.

CHAPTER FIVE

FROM IMAGISM TO PROJECTIVE VERSE

Imagism was, as we have seen, the chief manifestation of modernism in Anglo-American poetics in the early part of this century. As such it was the parent of two diverging but not altogether distinct tendencies in modern poetry. The first line of development and the one which is the major concern of this thesis may be traced from Imagism through Objectivism to Projective Verse. This development, we argue, is based on a philosophical position which is monist, materialist and dynamic. It leads to an acknowledgement of the real existence of the world and an emphasis on the accurate representation of images. It assumes the fundamental unity of all fields of human endeavour and denies the absolute division between art and science:

> To think about poetry it is necessary to point out that its aims and those of science are not opposed or mutually exclusive; and that only the more complicated, if not finer, tolerances of number, measure and weight that define poetry make it seem imprecise as compared to science, to quick readers of instruments. [1]

Thus says Zufosky. Certainly, this vision of the poet as scientist, as the accurate observer and recorder did exert a beneficial influence on all the moderns. First Hulme and then Pound promoted a surgical precision in writing which was a much needed corrective of the excessive subjectivism and flabby writing of the Georgians and their contemporaries.

However, superficial similarities in the precepts issued by Hulme and Pound disguise the genesis of a fundamental difference. Pound's definition of the image and the vortex was inter-actionist, the image and then the poem being the product of the interaction between organism and environment. Such a view is dynamic and monistic and may be developed into a philosophy of organism and process. This development is what will concern us when we follow

the somewhat wayward path which leads from Imagism to Pound, Williams, Objectivism, to Olson and Projective Verse and finally, to Robert Duncan and Edward Dorn.

But the hard, high road of modernism, especially in Britain, leads from Hulme and Eliot to Auden and the poet-critics of the "New Criticism". Their poetics originate from Hulme's assumptions which were avowedly classical, dualist and are eventually religious. In the Bergsonian tradition, this view emphasises subjective intuition as the only true knowledge and understands art as the attempt to create through the operation of "fancy" and craft some image or analogy which will convey the intuition to others. As we have already discovered (in Chapter Two) in discussing Eliot's concept of the"objective correlative" there is no guarantee of the connection of the artists intuition with his image for it, with the words in which he represents his image or with the image or emotion conjured up in his reader by those words which he has chosen. Having stressed so firmly the separation of physical and spiritual realms, these poets have no assurance of the validity of their poems as communications beyond the godness of God. If God is accepted, then they can adopt something similar to the neo-Thomist aesthetic of Jacques Maritain which we have already discussed in relation to the work of David Jones. Art becomes the search for valid signs, for presentations of images which will refer beyond themselves to eternal truths. The intuition need not be wholly subjective but should contain some permanent reality which may be abstracted and formalised in art. This emphasis on form and abstraction was, as we have seen, touched on by Hulme and developed by Wyndham Lewis though it has probably been more directly important in the visual and plastic arts than in poetry. Nevertheless in religious poetry there is often a movement from appearances to essences, from representation to contemplation. The physical or visual image becomes either mere illustration or symbolic of some universal truth beyond itself. [2]

From the classical, dualist standpoint the only alternative to God is scepticism. If there is no God, we have no justification for inferring from the poem any authorial intention, or, conversely, in using evidence of the author's intentions as in any way a key to the poem. There is no logical reason for regarding the poem as a communication. Further, though it may stir up our emotions and incite us to action or, on the other hand, reconcile our emotions and restrain us from action, there is no logical reason why it should make us do anything at all. Unlike the knowledge afforded by the supposedly inferior practical intellect, poetic knowledge seems singularly useless. When we come to discuss Charles Olson we shall discover how much emphasis he placed on the notion of "use". For him all activity was "useful" as it conserved or communicated energy; activity which is not "useful" dissipates energy and reduces order which in his philosophy of organism is a cardinal sin. Olson's position depends on a unitary theory of knowledge. For the dualist, as we have seen, poetic knowledge is separate; he comes to regard the poem as autonomous, an end in itself, to be considered and evaluated without reference to anything beyond itself. This is the purely aesthetic approach and seems ultimately sterile; certainly, by defending art as separate from other intellectual activity it renders it as, "for all practical purposes", expendable.

Attempts have been made to put poetry in the place of religion. Thinkers from Arnold to Maritain and Hulme felt that religion had been overthrown by scientific positivism and determinism, but their attempts to replace it with poetry as man's spiritual food have been unconvincing. In his essay "Literature as Knowledge" Allen Tate condemns Arnold's envisioned partnership between poet and scientist where the scientist observes and describes the external world while the poet provides emotion and feeling:

> While Arnold's poet was extending the hand of fellowship to the scientist, the scientist did not return the greeting; for never for an instant did he see himself as the

inert and useful partner in an enterprise of which he could not be permitted to define the entire scope. He was not, alas, confined to the inertia of fact, his procedure was dynamic all along, and it was animated by the confident spirit of posivitism which has since captured the modern world. [3]

Tate however accepts the dichotomy proposed by Arnold between the poet and the scientist and at the same time perpetuates an oversimplified view of the scientist's own philosophy. The very dynamism which Tate describes led the scientist to realise the limitations of positivism which depends on a strict separation of subject and object and the possibility of unbiased objective observation. In fields as far apart as physics and psychology scientists have discovered the real effects of mind upon the external world. Not only can mind act upon matter, it is impossible to separate the influence of the observer from the behaviour of the observed, even in the most clinical of scientific experiments.

Thus the meaning of the word "nature" as an object of scientific research slowly changed; it became a collective concept for all those areas of experience into which man can penetrate through science and technology, whether or not they are given to him "naturally" in direct experience. ... The atomic physicist has had to come to terms with the fact that his science is only a link in the endless chain of discussions of man with nature, but that it cannot simply talk of nature "as such". Natural science always presupposes man, and we must become aware of the fact that, as Bohr has expressed it, we are not only spectators but also always participants on the stage of life. [4]

Tate condemns the early work of I.A. Richards as forcefully as he dismisses Matthew Arnold, but he comes no closer to questioning their shared assumptions about the role and activity of the scientist.

... even in <u>The Principles of Literary Criticism</u> Mr. Richards was coming round to that view. Not that poetry would bring back religion, or become a new religion. It would perform the therapeutic offices of religion, the only part of it worth keeping. In short, poetry would "order" our minds, for although science was true, it had failed to bring intellectual order - it had broken up the older order of pseudo-statement, and although poetry was false, it would order our minds, whatever this ordering might mean. [5]

Tate's own solution which agrees with the later work of Richards is hardly more satisfactory. He proposes literature as a separate, independent, possibly superior form of knowledge. Poetry, he argues:

> is neither the world of verifiable science nor a projection of ourselves; yet it is complete. And because it is complete knowledge we may, I think, claim for it a unique kind of responsibility, and see it at times an irresponsibility equally distinct. The order of completeness that it achieves in the great works of the imagination is not the order of experimental completeness aimed at by the positivist sciences, whose responsibility is directed towards the verification of limited techniques. The completeness of science is an abstraction covering an ideal of co-operation among specialised methods. No one can have an experience of science, or of a single science. For the completeness of Hamlet is not of the experimental order ...

One cannot but feel that Tate is constructing straw men to knock over, his understanding of science seems so far from the contemporary scientist's own view of himself. Surely it would be more correct to oppose "literature, or a single literature" to "science, or a single science", or a particular scientific problem, theory or hypothesis to Hamlet or any other single work of art. Moreover, the complete knowledge of which he speaks would seem to be achieved only by emptying the poem of all content and therefore, presumably, of all meaning. He continues:

> We must return to, we must never leave, the poem itself. Its "interest" value is a cognitive one; it is sufficient that here in the poem, we get knowledge of a whole object. If rational enquiry is the only mode of criticism, we must yet remember that the way we employ that mode must always powerfully affect our experience of the poem. I have been concerned in this commentary with the compulsive, almost obsessed, application of an all-engrossing principle of pragmatic reduction to a formed realm of our experience, the distinction of which is its complete knowledge, the full body of the experience that it offers us. However, we may see the completeness of poetry, it is a problem less to be solved than, in its full import, to be preserved.

Such a passage illustrates clearly the frustration of this position. Poetry is complete knowledge, but can only be apprehended intuitively; criticism is a mode of rational enquiry but cannot, it seems, really reach the poem. The

New Critics themselves demonstrate the contradictions of this approach. They persist in rational enquiry and their best work illuminates and enhances the poetry it treats. Literary criticism, at its best, is a way of sharing the poem, a communication between reader and reader and between readers and the poem. The position which New Criticism and the literary academy allowed itself to be forced into has proved a dead end for creative art and therefore for criticism. The critic is reduced to endless repetitions of the same theoretical dogma - poetry is neither science nor religion but something else, a something else which cannot be rationally apprehended but which the critic must nevertheless approach in a spirit of rational enquiry, attempting to analyse the unanalysable. Allen Tate, for instance, declares "Let us not argue about it. It is here for those who have eyes to see",[7] yet writes article after article reiterating his arguments. The poet's task becomes equally sterile. He may strive to his utmost to create a supreme construct of words, finely organised, ordered, intensive, which will be a form of complete knowledge; yet his theory will tell him that the knowledge is only of itself, that there is no need for it to refer to anything beyond itself but that if it does attempt external reference, there is no reason to hope for success since there is no necessary link between word and object nor between object and the supposedly correlated intuition. He may conclude by finding himself imprisoned in his solipsistic universe sending poems purged of all misleading external reference into the void. And what can he hope for? At best, that some alien intelligence will encounter it with awed incomprehension. Few poets have written for long in this rarefied vein; those who have appeal to a limited readership. It is interesting that so many of those approved by the academy, Lowell, Berryman, Tate and, of course Eliot, should be, in the end, religious or God-acknowledging poets. The last two, who became major theoretical writers, had to have a subject

matter beyond poetry itself. Perhaps it was one of T.E. Hulme's most important insights to identify the classical with the religious stance.

Wallace Stevens has been one of the few poets to remain consistent in his struggles with the problems of materialist scepticism. His work plays on the gulf between life and art, between perception and representation, the ambiguities of facts and fictions. He is a master of language, of verbal elaboration, of rhyth mical felicity; but his poetry is about poetry, its theme is itself and this, finally, has seemed to some readers sterile, even trivialising:

> Stevens is a profound misleader simply that he is in a deeply important area (what I have yet no better word for than ornamentation (sic) [8]

Stevens, like Hulme, seems to see poetry as an escape from flux:

> They will get it straight one day at the Sorbonne.
> We shall return at twilight from the lecture
> Pleased that the irrational is rational,
>
> Until flicked by feeling, in a gildered street,
> I call you by name, my green, my fluent mundo.
> You will have stopped revolving except in crystal. [9]

The ironic undertones in these lines reveal Stevens's reservations about the ultimate value of such a goal, the reduction of the vivid world to a formal stillness.

Charles Olson approached the problem from the other direction; he sought to be:

> caught up and going at the speed (and) at the depth of both the knowledge of the reality we now possess, and thus the speed and depth of reality itself, especially as that reality is busy inside any one of us. [10]

Olson, as the most forceful spokesman of the "post-moderns", developed a position contrary to that of the academics. He wanted a poetry which would be open, kinetic, faithful to the universe of process and flux of which it was a part. By thus eschewing separation and completeness, he placed himself alongside the scientists in pursuit of

a unitary and developing knowledge. [11] Olson's theory owes much of its philosophical substance to Alfred North Whitehead, a debt which will be discussed later in this chapter. However, historically, his ideas trace back through Williams, the Objectivists, to Pound and Pound's version of Imagism.

The influence of Pound.

We recall that Pound himself was largely responsible for the formulae of the Imagist Manifesto including "Direct treatment of the thing whether subject or object". Although we have seen that this declaration is unsatisfactory if considered at any philosophical level, in practice it resulted in a concentration on the external, on the physical object, an eschewal of subjectivity and of vague emotionalism. Pound championed this development; his advocacy of exact observation and accurate presentation may be seen as an attempt to meet and indeed best the scientist on his own ground. His criticism affects a bluff, no-nonsense tone, a positivist style; it is remarkable how often he cites the scientific method as the proper, thorough way of doing things.

> Bad art is inaccurate art. It is art that makes false reports. If a scientist falsifies a report either deliberately or through negligence we consider him as either a criminal or a bad scientist according to the enormity of his offence, and he is punished or despised accordingly. [11]

However, Pound himself was far from believing that art was objective. For him, the image was "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time"; he eschewed impressionism in favour of the intensive art of vorticism:

> The logical end of impressionist art is the cinematograph. The state of mind of the impressionist tends to become cinematographical. Or, to put it another way, the cinematograph does away with the need of a lot of impressionist art.
>
> There are two opposed ways of thinking of a man; firstly, you may think of him as that towards perception moves, as the toy of circumstances, as the plastic substance receiving impressions; secondly, you may think of them

as directing a certain fluid force against circumstances, as conceiving instead of merely reflecting and observing.[12]

This is a rejection not only of impressionism but of determinist philosophy and positivist psychology where "mind" is reduced to observable responses. However, unlike the New Critics, Pound does not abhor science. Instead, he recognises different fields of science or knowledge, among which art has its place:

The arts, literature, poesy are a science, just as chemistry is a science. Their subject is man, mankind and the individual. [13]

Pound differed from Hulme in that he did not accept the absolute division between life and art, where life is a messy flux while art is permanent, ordered but removed from actuality. Rather, he believed in "a sort of permanent metaphor", in symbolism in its profounder sense":

It is not necessarily a belief in a permanent world: but it is a belief in that direction.

Imagism is not symbolism. The symbolists dealt in 'association', that is, in a sort of allusion, almost of allegory. They degraded the symbol to the status of a word. They made it a form of met onomy. One can be grossly 'symbolic', for example, by using the term 'cross' to mean 'trial'. The symbolists' symbols have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2 and 7. The Imagists' images have a variable influence, like the signs a, b, and x in algebra.[14]

He believed in real links between subjective intuition, language and the material world. He believed in poetry as an effective force:

It appears to me quite tenable that the function of literature as a generated prize-worthy force is precisely that it does incite humanity to continue living, that it eases the mind of strain, and feeds it, I mean definitely as nutrition of impulse. [15]

The point of Imagism is that it does not use 'images' as ornaments. The image is itself the speech. The image is the word beyond formulated language.

I once saw a small child go to an electric light switch and say 'Mama, can I open the light?' She was using the age-old language of exploration, the language of art. [16]

Poetry extends knowledge by articulating experience, experience which is continuously changing, continuously

novel. By discovering words which will be adequate to fresh experience, literature increases truth and thus has a moral as well as an epistemological function. Moreover, by articulating our experience, art leaves us open to the new, brings us up to the present. So that when Pound describes artists as "the antennae of the race", he is anticipating Charles Olson's demand that we be "equal to the real itself" and his proposition of the poet-historian who has to know:

By history I mean to know, to really know. The rhyme is still "mystery". We can't stand it. Nothing must be left undone. We have to run up against the wall. [17]

The responsibility of the poet towards his universe, the urge to articulation and the relief which it brings may be discovered in Maximus VI:

The land was relieved. I had drawn my length all this way and had covered this place too.

But we know that respite is only temporary, the matter of an instant for the wall recedes again and the poet's task recommences.

We may doubt whether Pound has the same sympathy or respect for the natural world as Olson, for despite the tenderness which appears in The Pisan Cantos, he retained a spiritual arrogance which made him more at home in high art than among the rocks and fossils of palaeolithic times which meant so much to Olson. However, the critical writings place Pound firmly in the humanist, even romantic camp and at the same time in the mainstream American tradition of Emerson and Whitman. The humanist believes that man can be redeemed through language, while the classicist sees language as more and more hopelessly contaminated. The former is expansive, seeking to extend poetry and living; the latter, in his attempt to find purity, contracts towards silence. Pound believed that poets purify and extend language, that through poetic dedication language could be improved, indeed had improved:

I believe language has improved; that Latin is better than Greek and French better than Latin for everything save certain melodic effects. [19]

Such optimism allows, in fact requires, that poetry continue to be written and asserts its supreme social, moral and political importance. It is an attitude naturally conducive to innovatory poetry, poetry with a social or political content and thus attractive to poets who see their role as one of active involvement rather an powerless detachment or aesthetic inutility.

Objectivism.

This humanistic strand in Imagist thinking which we have credited to Pound fused with the progressive and anti-academic tradition in American writing and emerged in the work of the Objectivists. This group included Louis Zukofsky, William Carlos Williams, Charles Reznikoff, Carl Rakosi, George Oppen and Basil Bunting. Except for the last, they were Americans and their ideas stemmed in part from Imagism, but also from specifically American developments in the theory of art, particularly in relation to painting and photography. William Carlos Williams in his Autobiography describes the Objectivist programme as a corrective to Imagism which had fallen into decadence in the twenties and thirties:

The Objectivist theory was this: we had had "Imagism" (Amygism, as Pound had called it), which ran quickly out. That, though it had been useful in ridding the field of verbiage, had no formal necessity implicit in it. It had already dribbled off into so-called "free verse", which, as we saw, was a misnomer. There is no such thing as "free verse". Verse is a measure of some sort. "Free verse" was without measure and needed none for its projected objectifications. Thus the poem had run down and become formally non-extant.

But, we argued, the poem, like every other form of art, is an object, an object that in itself formally presents its case and its meaning by the very form it assumes. Therefore, being an object, it should be so treated and controlled - but not as in the past.

The poem being an object (like a symphony or a cubist paining) it must be the purpose of the poet to make of his words a new form: to invent, that is, an object consonant with his day. This was what we wished to imply

by Objectivism, an antidote, in a sense, to the bare image haphazardly presented in loose verse. [20]

Other statements by Objectivists show the importance of Imagism as a point of reference and of departure. Rakosi said in an interview with L.S. Dembo:

... One way to see it is to see what it is not - how objectivism differs from imagism or symbolism, for example. You might think for a moment that, after all, objectivism is a form of imagism or naturalism. But Imagism as I recall ... was a reaction to the period immediately preceding, against literary affectations. So the imagists set out to do what the French impressionists in painting did, go out into the open and look, see what you see, and put it down without affectation of the then dominant literary influences. And that's as much as they did, but it wasn't complete. It was only the first step in a poetic process. That's why imagism is not altogether satisfying; the person of the poet is not sufficiently present.

Now symbolism, of course, is more in contrast with objectivism. It seems to me that the subject of symbolism is a poetic state of feeling and its aim is to reproduce it. It didn't really matter much what you started with - whether it was a flower or the moon. All the poet was concerned with was his own feeling. And for that subject, symbolism is suitable, but it's a very narrow subject. [21]

Rakosi's memory does less than justice to imagism at least as developed by Pound, since this demand for the presence of the person is surely another way of describing the attempt to "record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective". [22]

There are some grounds for suspecting the authenticity of Objectivism as a movement. All the poets testify that "Objectivist" was a title invented primarily to satisfy Harriet Monroe for whom Louis Zukofsky edited the February 1931 edition of Poetry. Zukofsky himself rejects the term "objectivism" and has always been scrupulous to retain the quotation marks round "Objectivist"; he even denies that any reference to Whitehead was implied, although as Mike Weaver has pointed out in William Carlos Williams: the American Background:

He now states that he (Zukofsky) had not read Whitehead at that time although he omits to mention that Williams with whom he was then corresponding on poetic matters, had. [23]

However, while the name may be as ill-defined and nebulous as the membership of the group, it does reflect a common sympathy and shared aims extending beyond the desire of impoverished and unpublished poets to see themselves in print. Perhaps George Oppen, a considerable poet and an uncompromising intellect, has offered the clearest interpretation:

> What I felt I was doing was beginning from Imagism as a position of honesty. The first question at that time in poetry was simply the question of honesty, of sincerity. But I learned from Louis, as against the romaticism or even the quaintness of the imagist position, the necessity for forming a poem properly, for achieving form. That's what "objectivist" really means. There's been tremendous misunderstanding about that. People assume it means the psychologically objective in attitude. It actually means the objectification of the poem. [24]

This insistence on the autonomy of the poem, not dissimilar from the views of the New Critics, was re-echoed by Williams's observation, "A poem is a small (or large) machine made out of words" [25] and by Zukofsky, who preceded Oppen in linking objectification and sincerity:

> In sincerity shapes appear concomitants of word combinations, precursors of (if there is continuance) completed sound or structure, melody or form. Writing occurs which is the detail, not mirage, of seeing, of thinking, with the things as they exist, and of directing them along a line of melody. Shapes suggest themselves, and the mind senses and receives awareness. Parallels sought for in the other arts recall the perfect line of occasional drawing, the clear beginnings of sculpture not proceeded with. Presented with sincerity, the mind even tends to supply in further suggestion, which does not attain rested totality, the totality not always found in sincerity and necessary only for perfect rest, complete appreciation. This rested totality may be called objectification - the apprehension satisfied completely as to the appearance of the art form as an object.[25]

The primary meaning of objectivism may indeed have been the recognition of the poem as object or structure in its own right, but this carried with it attitudes which might be called objective in the more usual sense. To regard the poem as an object alongside other objects in the world implies a belief in the real existence of the world and of things in it. This is George Oppen's faith:

that the nouns do refer to something; that it's there, that it's true, the whole implication of these nouns; that appearances represent reality, whether or not they misrepresent it: that this in which the thing takes place, this thing is here, and that these things do take place. [26]

Such a faith allows for Pound's "absolute symbolism", where words refer to existing things and meaning lies in the world. So for Williams and so for Zukofsky, poetry is thinking with things as they exist:

> Say it, No ideas but in things. Mr.
> Paterson has gone away
> to rest and write. Inside the bus one sees
> his thoughts sitting and standing. His thoughts
> alight and scatter. [27]

The consequence of the belief in objective existences including human existence is a respect for the world, a desire to treat the other objects among which one finds oneself scrupulously and sincerely:

It is still a principle with me, of more than poetry, to notice, to state, to lay down the substantive for its own sake. [28]

This approach to poetry though derived in part from imagism, was strongly influenced and reinforced by contemporary advances in painting and photography which was where, in the twenties and thirties (and, perhaps, in film and the cinema) the real developments in American art were taking place. This influence and in particular the importance of Alfred Steiglitz and his circle is described by Bram Dijkstra in his book Cubism, Steiglitz and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams (Princeton, 1978). Although he underplays, in my view, the importance of imagism and especially of Pound, he makes it abundantly clear that the photography of Steiglitz and the pictures of Sheeler and Demuth on the one hand and Cubist theory on the other, were of considerable importance for the 'Objectivist' poets and for Williams in particular. Zukofsky's manifesto reveals the photographic influence:

An Objective. (Optics). The lens bringing the rays from an object to a focus. (Military use) - That which is aimed at. (Use extended to poetry) - Desire for which is objectively perfect, inextricably the direction of historic and contemporary particulars. [29]

This passage assumes the real existence, not only of that which is seen, and of the image, but also of the aiming intelligence. In fact, the image occurs, physically, as the intersection of the aiming force with the force of that which is aimed at. The impact of such forces must be considerable and we can anticipate Olson's theory of the poem as a "high energy construct". But what we should note as a distinguishing feature of the "Objectivists" which separates them from the tradition of Eliot is their denial of the objective correlative:

Crude symbolism is to associate emotions with natural phenomena. Such work is empty. It is very typical of almost all that is done by the writers who fill the pages every month of such a paper as. (sic) Everything that I have done in the past ... except those parts which may be called excellent - by change, have that quality about them. It is typified by the use of the word "like" of that "evocation" of the "image" which served us for a time. Its abuse is apparent. The insignificant "image" may be "evoked" never so ably and still mean nothing. The work will be in the realm of the imagination as plain as the sky is to the fisherman - A very clouded sentence. The word must be put down for itself, not as a symbol of nature, but a part, cognisant of the whole - aware - civilised. [30]

Stieglitz's aims in photography, as described by Dijkstra, are particularly pertinent to this view:

Steiglitz realised through the achievement of these photographs, and through his continuing and ever more precise observation of the objects of concrete reality, that he could express his most intense and therefore most inarticulate emotions accurately in terms of the materials of life. In the lines and textures and shapes of things he found the creative qualities which, if selected and recorded carefully and precisely, would make the resultant photograph expressive of his feelings. But this was not a process detrimental to the reality of the object so used. The object did not become a means to an end. It remained autonomous; the photographer by focussing on the object in his special way clarified certain of its hitherto unrecognised but nonetheless inherent qualities, which when understood, would enhance the object's independent

significance. Thus the artist could do justice to the object without forcing it to function as a metaphor for something else. The photographer must therefore begin by seeing all things with a perfect precision, perfect penetration. If he does so, and he is closely attuned to the elements of his own subjective experience, he will be able to recognise in certain natural objects around him elements not hitherto discovered but nevertheless present in them, manifested through their shapes, lines and volumes, which constitute not only equivalances to his original emotions, but are, indeed, factors of the material origins of those emotions. Hence the objects of nature are recognised to be the sources of our spiritual constitution; the continent of our non-rational being as much as of our intellectual existence is shown to be determined by the contents of the physical world. Spirit, in other words, derives from matter. The photographer, seeing accurately, discovers in what elements of matter spirit has its origins, and in his photograph, which represents the moment of his discovery, he records the encounter, making his discovery permanently accessible to everyone who is willing to meet the object recorded on its own terms. In this sense the photographer's record is intended to invoke in the observer a kind of Platonic recognition. But in Plato the objects of the natural world are merely shadows of absolutes, a means to an end. For Stieglitz, the objects of nature are the absolutes from which all is derived. [31]

This passage indicates a number of ideas which appealed to Williams in particular, the most "painterly" of all the Objectivists. The views of Stieglitz provided for a unitary, organic and evolutionary universe compatible with Whitehead's cosmology. Thus, not only did they provide support for the Objectivists, but were, in some part, a foundation for the theories of Charles Olson. Several points should be noted. First, the demands for accuracy and direct treatment set out by the Imagists were re-echoed in the theories of the "straight" photographers:

The word "straight" as used by the photographers of Stieglitz's day was described as an absence of manipulation in the printing process. The print was a straight one in that it was taken direct without enlargement, local shading, or retouching, from a negative which was equally free from human interference. The intention was to rid the photographic medium of painterly techniques. But the moral fervour which accompanied this devotion to the inherent capacities of the machine camera to render precisely what has been visualised by the operator, later invested 'stright' with a meaning which suggested a complete aesthetic; moral vision and technical honesty were inseparable in Stieglitz's view. The reality of life, as well as

of God, implied an unswerving confrontation with the facts. Thus the weight of "straight" lay not only on the printing process, the post-visualised phase, but also on the pre-visualising phase before the negative was made. Permitting only a mechanical process as intermediary, the straight print was a direct transcription of the image perceived by the photographer.[32]

Thus "objectivism" in the first sense of regarding the work of art as an object among other objects entailed "objectivism" in the more everyday sense of accurate observation and the supression of distorting personal emotion or subjectivity. It was not, of course, a question of supressing the subject completely or of attempting to deny his inevitable bias, the selectivity of individual perception. Rather it was an attempt of the artist to stand outside himself and record the intersection of subject and object in the image of the poem, photograph or painting.

The Objectivists, like the photographers associated with Stieglitz, found confirmation for their ideas in the work of the Cubists. When mind, physical world and the work of the imagination are all recognised to have objective reality in a common world, that which is common can be identified as form; the work of art becomes the attempt to isolate and identify that form. This process is the reverse of generalisation or classification since it is by the close observation of the particular that form is discovered.

Flowers by the Sea.

When over the flowery, sharp pasture's
edge, unseen, the salt ocean

lifts its form - chicory and daisies
tied, released, seem hardly flowers alone

but colour and the movement - or the shape
perhaps - of restlessness, whereas

the sea is circled and sways
peacefully upon its plantlike stem [33]

In this poem it is by close observation of the physical particulars that form to which the mind responds is abstracted and presented in words. Dijkstra points out that this poem is very close to the watercolours of

John Marin and may indeed be taken from a painting rather than life. Basing poems on pictures was a writing practice continued by Williams throughout his career, right up to Pictures From Breughel, his last book; there is no deception involved for which the poet pursues is the shared recognition of form which can be transferred from the physical world to the painting to the poem. In the work of the Cubists and some of the expressionists the pursuit of form might lead to a non-naturalistic art where relation of planes and lines are stressed or where different aspects of the image may be presented simultaneously in order to achieve a fuller knowledge of it than in any single moment of perception. However, there is no conflict between naturalism and the pursuit of form if it is realised that any representation of the physical object is a formal representation and that its accuracy depends not on a slavish inclusiveness of detail but on the accurate application of the artistic medium, in poetry, on the precise choice and placing of words. In Spring and All, Williams stresses again and again that form and design are functions of the imagination. [34] Like Demuth and Stieglitz he believed it the artist's business to see, to perceive the instant in all its novelty and freshness, and to capture or record the unique form of that perception which is the product of his shaping imagination. So the poet's duty is twofold; he must have schooled himself to perceive, to be adequate to the novelty of the instant of experience and he must have the technique to transcribe his image into words. This art is not parasitic on the world but contributes to it; it is man's role in nature. "When we name it life exists ..."; "The only means he has to give value to life is to recognise it with the imagination and name it". [35] The imagination affirms reality but at the same time by the creation of new forms extends it:

> Imagination is not to avoid reality, nor is it description nor an evocation of objects or situations, it is to say that poetry does not tamper with the world but moves it ... [36]

The imagination liberates the mind from preconceptions and the stale images of previous art, thus preparing man for the novelty of reality itself, reality which can only be the experience of the interaction of mind and nature:

> Sometimes I speak of imagination as a force, an electricity or a medium, a place. It is immaterial which: for whether it is the condition of a place or a dynamisation its effect is the same: to free the world of fact from the impositions of "art" ... and to liberate the man to act in whatever direction his disposition leads.
>
> The word is not liberated, therefore able to communicate release from the fixities which destroy it until it is accurately tuned to the fact which giving it reality, by its own reality establishes its own freedom from the necessity of a word, thus freeing it and dynamising it at the same time ... [37]

The reference of the pronouns in this last sentence is ambiguous but the implication seems to be that it is through the accurate use of language, the precise "fit" of word to fact that both art and nature can proceed into novelty. The final poem of Spring and All is presumably intended as an example of William's precepts:

XXVII

Black eyed susan
rich orange
round the purple core

the white daisy
is not
enough

Crowds are white
as farmers
who live poorly

But you
are rich
in savagery—

Arab
Indian
dark woman

Here we have an illustration of the theory of no ideas but in things, the presentation of an argument, or the development of meaning from clearly observed particulars. The poet presents us with the first flower in the detail and richness of its colour which he contrasts with the

more common daisy, here perceived as lacking interest or attraction and therefore barely named, the sole specification being its whiteness, the colour of generality and lack. The poverty of whiteness extends over the next two sections and the connotations stretch into sexual, social and racial areas; colour and life are opposed to generality and abstraction in the perhaps too easy image of white male envy of dark female sexuality. We may feel that the last two sections are not entirely successful because, after all, they generalise, they give us a poet's notion instead of the observed particulars speaking for themselves. However, the poem plays aurally on the "r" sound, strong in the first section, vanishing in the second, rolling to a climax in the last part before being swallowed in the final "dark". This musical effect may account for the felt power of the poem which certainly cannot be explained at the semantic level. We might say that by this means the poet is enabled to renew language; by using sound he can restore old, hackneyed images or cliches. But as an answer this evades a real problem, a difficulty which renders the dualist approach all the more attractive. By positing that there are two kinds of knowing, the dualist may analyse logically the semantic content of a piece of language while denying or relegating its aural effect. It is these non-rational qualities characteristic of poetry and also of demagogic rhetoric which are dangerous, since they can move us to conclusions which we would not arrive at analytically. If, with the monist, we hold that all knowledge is of a piece and that our emotional and intellectual faculties cannot so easily be divorced, we are forced to acknowledge our own irrationalism. This may be distasteful to some, but it is surely the more honest, indeed the saner approach, for it is only by knowing what we are, in all our complexity, that we can hope to control what we do. Returning to this poem, we may note our tendency to associate intellectual rigour with the visual image, for it is as Williams retreats from the particularities of the eye to concentrate on those of the ear that we lose confidence in the relation between

the language and that to which it refers. Nevertheless the poem retains the degree of truth conferred by its power and its existence as an object in its own right.

Moreover, whatever we may think of the poem, we may observe that in this and many of the other pieces in Spring and All Williams has solved the problem of stasis, the fixed image which would exactly capture or crystallise a moment but which by virtue of its fixity was totally self-contained, sealed from development or life. In Williams's poems

> The imagination goes from one thing to another. Given many things of nearly totally divergent natures but possessing one-thousandth part of a quality in common, provided that be new, distinguished, these things belong in an imaginative category not in a gross natural array.[38]

This argument might be a defence, though hardly a sufficient one, for the poem just discussed. It anticipates Olson's proclamation that "one perception leads immediately to another perception". Williams may occasionally restrict himself to the "still life" proper, as in "The Disputants":

> Upon the table in their bowl
> in violent disarray
> of yellow sprays, green spikes
> of leaves, red-printed petals
> and curled heads of blue
> and white among the litter
> of the forks and crumbs and plates
> the flowers remain composed.
> Cooly their allegory continues
> above the coffee and loud talk
> grown frail as vaudeville [39]

but more often his imagination goes from one thing to another, taking us to a different point from where we started. George Oppen faced the same challenge in his Discrete Series:

> My book of course was called Discrete Series. That's a phrase in mathematics. A pure mathematical series would be one in which each term is derived from the preceding term by a rule. A discrete series is a series of terms each of which is empirically derived, each one of which is empirically true. And this is the reason for the fragmentary character of those poems. I was attempting to construct a meaning by empirical statements, by imagist statements. [40]

In Discrete Series, Oppen attempts by a perspectivist, almost Cubist technique to present moments of intersection: of different worlds "The cannon of that day/In our parks", "The cars pass/By the elevated posts/And the movie sign/A man sells postcards"; of human and non-human, "It is you/ who truly excel the vegetable"; of artifact and nature

> Closed car - closed in glass -
> At the curb,
> Unapplied and empty
> A thing among others
> Over which clouds pass and the
> alteration of lightning.

Even in the most personal category of the intersection of self and other, the poet attempts to move the centre from himself to the poem, to the objective centre of the moment of meeting:

> Who comes is occupied
> Towards the chest (in the crowd moving
> opposite
> Grasp of me) [41]

Oppen's attempt to eschew interpretation but to let the image speak for itself nevertheless allows for the emergence of recurrent themes and forms. By supressing his own personality and pointing to "empirical truths", albeit selected by him, it appears that the poet's pre-occupations match with themes or forms in the actual world. Form becomes a matter of objective fact whether it derives from mind, the world or the intersection of mind and world.

Oppen's abnegation of the structuring "I", his desire to free the objects of the poem for their own development, suggested possibilities for the long poem. But Discrete Series is not a long poem, or at least not in the epic sense of the poems we are chiefly concerned with; it is rather a series of meditations using techniques developed by the Imagists and Objectivists in poetry, by Cubists and post-expressionists in art. Oppen's very rigour and sincerity preclude him from the epic poem; most of his poetry is mediated personal experience. In his later work, for instance the long poem Route, he does tackle the public

matter of our times but actually returns to the voice of the first person as the organising form.

Williams and Olson

William Carlos Williams did rise to the lure of epic, the public "long poem"; "I had known always that I wanted to write a long poem". [42] However, his description of how he set about it has a curiously old-fashioned ring. "The idea was a metaphysical conception: how to get that into a form probably came gradually".[43] In his Autobiography, in a passage which is quoted in the foreword to Paterson, Williams adheres more closely to the doctrine,

> no ideas but in things. The poet thinks with his poem, in that lies his thought and that in itself is the profundity. The thought is Paterson, to be discovered there ...
>
> I took the city as my "case" to work up, really to work it up. It called for poetry such as I did not know, it was my duty to discover or make such a context in the "thought". To make a poem, fulfilling the requirements of the art, and yet new, in the sense that in the very lay of Paterson as Paterson would be discovered, perfect, perfect in the special sense of the poem, to have it - if it rose to flutter into life awhile - it would be as itself, locally, and so like every other place in the world. For it is in that, as it is particular to its own idiom that it lives. [44]

The difficulty with Paterson is that while in its parts it remains faithful to the notion that particulars rigorously observed and recorded will themselves reveal structure and form, its total shape is imposed according to the preconceptions of the author and is based on an explicit symbolic proposition:

> A man like a city and a woman like a flower
> - who are in love. Two women. Three women.
> Innumerable women, each like a flower.
>
> But
> only one man - like a city. [45]

This statement carries the advantages of honesty. It is anti-poetic in that art does not attempt to conceal art and we are given no licence to indulge in academic games of spotting the allegory. However, the fact that we find ourselves using terms like allegory, the presence

of four "likes" in this passage, introducing similies or analogies suggest the operation of fancy in the manner of Hulme. The need to construct or state the analogy implies a doubt in its universal validity. Instead of relying on a matching of form between mind and the external world, or rather the emergence of form from the meeting of mind and world, Williams loses confidence in his own mind as representative and seeks to impose a personal form on his experience. The phrase "worked up" as used by Williams is instructive, for it conveys the feeling of Paterson as being, overall, laborious and contrived. In saying this, we must recognise the energy and flow of many passages in Paterson. In fact, it is curious how the deliberation in the total plan contradicts . a the message of certain of the parts in the poem itself:

> There is no direction. Whither? I
> cannot say. I cannot say
> more than how. [46]

It may be that this question can be resolved biographically. Williams cherished even from his Keatsian days the ambition to write a long poem and had long been familiar with the tradition of poems on the Passaic River. Moreover, his innovations in poetry generally were germinated from a seed implanted by someone else. His initiation into modernism was at the hands of Ezra Pound; his theory as an Objective was derived very largely from Stieglitz and his circle. It may be that his recognition of what he was doing in Paterson and his later work sprang at least in part from a reading of Olson's Projective Verse to which he paid the very great tribute of including almost all of it in his Autobiography. Certainly, it seems from his introductory note to Part V that he started off with one conception of the long poem and finished with another:

> I have come to understand not only that many changes have occurred in me and the world, but I have been forced to recognise that there can be no end to such a story as I have envisioned with the terms which I had laid down for myself [47]

Wallace Stevens has written of Williams:

> Williams writes, I think, in order to write. He needs to write. What is the nature of this need? What does a man do when he delineates the images of reality? Obviously. the need is a general need and the activity a general activity. It is of our nature that we proceed from the chromatic to the clear, from the unknown to the known. Accordingly, the writer who practices in order to make perfect is really practising to get at his subject, and, in that exercise, is participating in a universal activity. He is obeying his nature. Imagism (as one of Williams's many involvements, however long ago) is not superficial. It obeys an instinct. Moreover, imagism is an ancient phase of poetry. It is something permanent. Williams is a writer to whom writing is the grinding of a glass, the polishing of a lens by means of which he hopes to be able to see clearly. His delineations are trials. They are rubbings of reality. [48]

Here Stevens has recognised what was to appeal to contemporary and later writers; the practice of poetry as a means to knowledge. This description accords with what is best in William's writing; the need to remain open, the need to stay abreast with reality. This is the urge to poetry and art as the unstoppable and necessary human manifestation of the "creative urge of the world", the recognition that man can only discover or pattern the world as he stays alive to its changes.

We have already seen how Williams's receptivity was illustrated by his acknowledgement of Projective Verse. Olson reciprocated this respect: Williams's poetry and his prose work, In the American Grain, were among the sacred books at Black Mountain College during Olson's rectorship; "no ideas but in things" and "so much depends/on a red wheelbarrow" were slogans and shibboleths for this followers, a new generation of counter-establishment poets. However, Olson was critical of Williams. He was an example whose usefulness extended only so far:

> his primary contrast, for our purposes is, BILL his Pat is exact opposite of Ez's, that is Bill HAS an emotional system which is capable of extensions & comprehensions the ego-system (the Old Deal, Ez as Cento Man, here dates) is not. Yet by making his substance historical of one city, (the

> Joyce deal), Bill completely licks himself, lets time roll him under as Ez does not, and thus, so far as what is the more important, methodology contributes nothing, in fact delays, deters and hampers, by not having busted through the very problem which Ez has so brilliantly faced and beat[49]

Olson, as we know, demanded poetry which would be

> AN ENACTMENT OF
>
> the going reality of (approximate, shot at) THAT WHICH IS ABREAST OF US: now here and now, <u>not</u> what was what was we do lament.[50]

The long poem as he envisaged it would not be a narrative of the past, nor even a combination of past tales and present particulars but a field poem whose contents were all discovered as simultaneous and contemporary. Pound, Olson believed, did manage to transcend historical time, but only through a sublime egotism which is no longer acceptable:

> Ez's epic solves problem by his ego: his single emotion breaks all down to his equals or inferiors (so far as I can see only two, possibly, are admitted, by him, to be his betters - Confucius, & Dante - Which assumption, that there are intelligent men whom he can out talk, is beautiful because it destroys historical time, and
>
> thus creates the methodology of the Cantos, viz, a space-field where, by inversion, though the material is all time material, he has driven through it so sharply by the beak of his ego, that, he has turned time into what we must now have, space and its live air.[51]

For Olson, the problem in <u>The Cantos</u> is that while Pound achieves the luminous detail he ignores the local and by thus rejecting the particularism of place forfeits the universal. <u>The Cantos</u>, according to his argument, do not finally stand up, not because of an excess of erudition, nor from a failure of the ideogrammic or collage method, but rather because they are tied to a single, domineering will. Thus, instead of being a reenactment of reality they are a portrait of Ezra Pound. Williams, on the other hand, as an objectivist, as a follower of the "straight" photographers, did try to present the image as fully and

as accurately as possible, seeking to discover its form so that as recreated in art it might stand independently. However, in Paterson, argues Olson, Williams does not succeed in bringing the past into the present of the poem; consequently sections of the poem are inert, inorganic.

He would attribute the failure of Williams and Pound to a less than total commitment to open form. In Pound's case, he has imposed his personal will on the poem, selecting and ordering its parts to conform with his own preconceived ideas of order and pattern. In the case of Williams, the poet has allowed his preconceived theory of what a long poem should be, what it should contain and what are its limits, to impose a predetermined form on his work. However, to argue that Paterson and The Cantos are not sufficiently open is, at the least, counter-intuitive. For most readers, their fault lies in their apparent formlessness and lack of order. These difficulties force us to reconsider the notions of closed and open form.

Practically and in the historical context, open form was a reaction against poetic conventions, stanzaic patterns and fixed metres. In the context of literary politics it was an attack on the new academic poetry, and it was very largely a recapitulation of the arguments about free verse and organic form which so exercised the imagists. Closed forms, poetic conventions, were rejected because they implied a dichotomy between form and content which was condemned: "Form is never more than an extension of content". However, if the demand for open form is interpreted as no more than a refusal to write (or read) sonnets, clearly it is inadequate. Many fine poems are written in conventional measures, whether in blank verse, villanelles, terza rima or whatever. Such poems achieve a unity of form and content which is woefully absent in other unstructured and structureless effusions. If the distinction between closed and open form is to have any value, it must be interpreted at the metaphysical and methodological levels.

The possibility of open form depends on the belief that art is inseparable from life, and that no individual work, no more than any individual person, can be an island unto itself. A poem must have its structural unity, but it will be composed of smaller structures and form part of larger structures. Robert Duncan's poetry is the obvious illustration. His individual poems are complete, but form parts of series, while his work as a whole, he believes, is only one part of area of the entire field of literature. And again, that literature only continues as it feeds from life, from experience, which is itself fed and shaped by the art which articulates it.

As a work of art, therefore, open form describes the poem which continues to be available, which stays alive for us, which can be incorporated in the present moment. As an instruction to the poet, writing in open form entails abandoning predetermined ideas of what the poem ought to be and leaving the mind alive to the impact of experience so that the poem will emerge as a product of the interaction of mind and world, inner and outer. Translated into more orthodox critical language, we find we are discussing once again the distinction between imagination and fancy. The form which emerges from the coincidence of internal and external, or objective and objective, is the product of the imagination. It is a discovery; new, creative, transcending the personal and surpassing the present. Its images are metaphors. The form imposed by the poet's decision is the product of fancy. It is an arbitrary manipulation of reality which rejects novelty and therefore does not go beyond the present. In Olson's terms, it is not projective. Its images, whether or not introduced by "like" or "as", are similes and analogies.

In practice, every poem must be closed to a degree, restricted by the limitations of its author, its individuality, his mental conditioning and his mortality. However, the commitment to open form derives from an acceptance of a philosophy which is unitative and based on process. In

the next chapter we shall consider the relevance of two philosophers, Whitehead and Heidegger, to "post-modern" poetics, and in particular to the long poem of open form.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1 Louis Zukofsky, Prepositions (London, 1967) p.16.

2 Here I am referring to religious poetry which is based on an intellectual acceptance of God; where poetry is inspired by a fervent devotion it may result in a vivid and detailed celebration of the physical creation, as, for instance, in the work of David Jones or Gerard Manley Hopkins.

3 Allen Tate in "Literature and Knowledge" in On Language and Poetry (Princeton, 1942) p.17.

4 Werner Heisenberg, "The Representation of Nature in Contemporary Physics" in The Discontinuous Universe edited by Sears and Lord (New York, 1972) p.127.

5 Tate, "The Present Function of Criticism" in On Language and Poetry, p.10.

6 "Literature as Knowledge" in On Language and Poetry, pp.47-48.

7 "Three Types of Poetry" in On Language and Poetry, p.114.

8 Charles Olson, Letters for Origin (London, 1969) p.99.

9 Wallace Stevens, "Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction" in Collected Poems (London, 1955) pp.406-407.

10 Charles Olson, The Special View of History (Berkeley, 1970) p.15.

11 Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist" ir Literary Essays, p.43.

12 "Vorticism", in Ezra Pound, Penguin Critical Anthology, p.54.

13 "The Serious Artist", p.42.

14 "Vorticism" in Gaudier-Brzeska p 84

15 "How to Read" in Selected Literary Essays, p.21.

16 "Vorticism" Ezra Pound, p.53.

17 Special View of History, p.20.

18 Charles Olson, "The Gold Machine" in The Maximus Poems IV, V, VI (London, 1970) n.p.

19 "Letter to Iris Barry", 1916 in Ezra Pound, p.67.

20 William Carlos Williams, Autobiography (London, 1969) p.264-265.

21 Carl Rakosi in Contemporary Literature, Vol.10, No.2, p.82.

22 In "Vorticism", Ezra Pound, p.89.

23 Mike Weaver, William Carlos Williams: The American Background (Cambridge, 1971) p.54.

24 George Oppen, Contemporary Literature, X, 3, p.160.

25 William Carlos Williams, Preface to The Wedge in The Collected Later Poems, (New York, 1963) p.4.

26 Contemporary Literature, X, 2, p.163.

27 William Carlos Williams, Collected Earlier Poems, p.233.

28 Contemporary Literature, X, 2, p.161.

29 Poetry (Chicago) February, 1931.

30 William Carlos Williams, Spring and All, (New York, 1923, 1970) p.23.

31 Bram Dijkstra, p.100.

32 Weaver, p.57

33 Collected Earlier Poems, p.87. This poem is discussed by Dijkstra. p.184-185.

34 See p.17.

35 Spring and All, p.43.

36 Spring and All, p.96.

37 Spring and All, p.98.

38 From Koré in Hell. See William Carlos Williams, Penguin Critical Anthology (Harmondsowrth, 1972) p.44.

39 Collected Earlier Poems, p.218.

40 Contemporary Literature, X, 2, p.160.

41 All from Discrete Series in Collected Poems, (London, 1972) pp.9-20.

42 I Wanted to Write a Poem (London, 1967) p.87.

43 I Wanted to Write a Poem, p.87.

44 Paterson, (New York, 1963) n.p.

45 Paterson, p.7.

46 Paterson, p.18.

47 Paterson, n.p.

48 Wallace Stevens, "Rubbings of Reality" in Opus Posthumous edited by Samuel French Morse (New York, 1957) p.258.

49 Charles Olson, Mayan Letters, (London, 1968) p.27.28

50 Letters for Origin, p.10.

51 Mayan Letters, p.26-27.

CHAPTER SIX

WHITEHEAD AND HEIDEGGER

Alfred North Whitehead must be a central figure in any attempt to discuss the development of "Process poetics". In the first place, his work was known to most of the poets under consideration, including Williams, Olson, Duncan, Dorn and, at an earlier stage, Hugh MacDiarmid. (There is no evidence, as far as I know, that he had any influence on David Jones.) More specifically, because of his profound influence on Charles Olson, who was a primary theoretician of poetry in the fifties and sixties, Whitehead's ideas and philosophical approach became part of the intellectual climate and formed the basis for the unspoken assumptions out of which poets wrote. Whitehead, after he left Britain for America and Harvard, moved into metaphysics and away from mathematics. As a metaphysician, his standing is probably much higher in the United States than in Britain and reference to his ideas has tended to confer status and intellectual respectability on many of the fairly loosely related notions of process, objectification and creativity embraced by the post-modern poets.

The relationship of poetry to philosophy, and of particular poets to particular philosophers is always difficult to determine and simplistic interpretations of the one in terms of the other are certainly to be avoided. In the case of Olson, Robert von Hallberg has pointed[1] out that the poet found Whitehead's Process and Reality of use because it provided a systematic exposition of so many of the ideas Olson had arrived at on his own account; he also shows that the poet stood much of Whitehead's philosophy on its head to establish man as the centre of the human universe. However, we may still ask what it is about Whitehead's philosophy of organism, even in its popular mediated form, which has appealed so much to contemporary poets.

At the most general level, Whitehead is attractive because he claims to provide a cosmology which can include the new physics, which can reconcile quantum theory and theology, nuclear science and Plato. Accepting this system, the poet can feel himself contemporary, "abreast of reality", no longer succumbing to the domination of positivism but rather transcending it as the most advanced scientists have done. The sense of being at front rather than behind raises poetic morale and authority.

More specifically, the philosophy of organism appears to overcome the dichotomy of subject, of mind and body.

> Finally, we have to consider the type of structural society which gives rise to the traditional body-mind problem. For example, human mentality is partly the outcome of the human body, partly the single directive agency of the body, partly a system of agitations which have a certain irrelevance to the physical relationships of the body. The Cartesian philosophy is based upon the seeming fact - the plain fact - of one body and one mind, which are too substances in casual association. For the philosophy of organism the problem is transformed.
>
> Each actuality is essentially bipolar, physical and mental, and the physical inheritance is essentially accompanied by a conceptual reaction partly conformed to, and partly introductory of, a relevant novel contrast, but always introducing emphasis, valuation and purpose. The integration of the physical and mental side into a unity of experience is a self-formation which is a process of concrescence, and which by the principle of objective immortality characterizes the creativity which transcends it. So though mentality is non-spatial, mentality is always a reaction from, and integration with, physical experience which is spatial. It is obvious that we must not demand another mentality, presiding over these other actualities (a kind of Uncle Sam, over and above all the U.S. citizens). All the life in the body is the life of the individual cell. There are thus millions upon millions of centres of life in each animal body. So what needs to be explained is not dissociation of personality but unifying control, by reason of which we not only have unified behaviour, which can be observed by others, but also consciousness of a unified experience.[2]

Whitehead argues for a universe which is pluralistic but coherent; in actuality atomic. The actual entities of which reality is made up are unique occasions in space-

time; they are self-creative, the sum of their process and outcome, and when they have achieved satisfaction they perish, or become unreal. Each actual entity evolves by prehending, or feeling, every other entity in the universe, to a greater or lesser extent. From its physical pole it prehends the physical data of its environment, from its mental pole it may prehend the eternal objects, like Platonic forms, which will constitute its subjective aim. Put the other way, each actual entity will be "ingressed" by eternal objects and by the physical data contingent to it. Actual entities, as the atomic components of reality, are not minds, nor egos; they need not even be conscious, although they do have mentality defined by their experience. For Whitehead, consciousness is an attribute of intensity of organisation, or evolutionary development, not a radically different substance from matter. Indeed, he emphasizes that reality is to be treated as vector rather than scalar, modifications of energy within space-time.

> In physical science this principle takes the form which should never be lost sight of in fundamental speculation, that scalar quantities are derivation from vector quantities. In more familiar language, this principle can be expressed by the statement that the notion of 'passing on' is more fundamental than that of a private individual fact. In the abstract language here adopted for metaphysical statement 'passing on' becomes 'creativity', in the dictionary sense of the verb creare, 'to bring forth, beget, produce ...' no entity can be divorced from the notion of creativity. The entity is at least a particular form capable of infusing its own particularity into creativity.[3]

The thing itself is what it does and it is the "how" not the "what" which distinguishes separate entities. We may be reminded of William's "I cannot say/more than how. The how (howl) only/is at my disposal"[4] in this passage from Whitehead:

> how an actual entity becomes constitutes what the actual entity is; so that the two descriptions of an actual entity are not independent. Its 'being' is constituted by its 'becoming'. This is the principle of process.[5]

What does all this signify for the artists? First of all, man is repossessed of and reintegrated with his world. The bugbear of dualism is overcome since all nature obeys the same general laws, mind and human consciousness being interpreted as the attributes of more highly evolved organisms. Because man is of the same nature as the rest of the world and because in his moments of consciousness he experiences the concrescence wherein one actual occasion prehends all other entities with greater or lesser degrees of relevance, he is truly returned to what Olson termed "ripe, live centre". So not only can man feel that he is "one with his skin" but also that the "world is mine" just as much as "these hands and feet are mine".[6] Thus a metaphysical justification and toughening is provided for an epistemology which validates sensuality as an element of knowledge, a view which the "romantic humanist" had instinctively or intuitively maintained. We may think of Walter Pater, in the Conclusion to The Renaissance where he shows an awareness of the human organism as part of the wider environment, as well as a consciousness of the intensity of the moment as the only reality. Indeed, his insistence on the moment and the attempt to achieve intensification of experience in the moment surely anticipates and may indeed have influenced Olson.

> To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. ... What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy, of Comte, or of Hegel, or of our own. ... The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.[7]

Perhaps time and the aureate prose have disguised the startling similarities between this position and the demands for "projective verse" and "open form", the exhortations to eschew abstraction so as to be "equal to the real itself".

The new humanism asserted by Olson[8] was quite distinct from the liberal humanism of the universities but may be quite properly identified with the romantic humanism rejected by Hulme. Again, interestingly, Pater's definition of the distinction between Romanticism and Classicism is pertinent:

> There are the born classicists who start with form, to whose minds the comeliness of the old, immemorial, well-recognised types in art and literature, have revealed themselves impressively; who will entertain no matter which will not go easily and flexibly into them; whose work aspires only to be a variation upon, or study from, the older masters. "'Tis art's decline, my son!" they are always saying, to the progressive element in their own generation; to those who care for that which in fifty year's time every one will be caring for. On the other hand, there are the born romanticists, who start with an original, untried matter, still in fusion; who conceive this vividly, and hold by it as the essence of their work; who, by the very vividness and heat of their conception, purge away, sooner or later, all that is not organically appropriate to it, till the whole effect adjusts itself in clear, orderly, proportionate form; which form, after a very little time, becomes classical in its turn.[9]

Olson's humanism is based on a concept of man's nature and energies as an extension or intensification of more general physical forces and a rejection of a notion of the spirit as radically separate from matter. Such a position is a direct denial of the possibility of asceticism, the shunning of the material world which is open to the dualist. In The Maximus Poems Olson identifies with the Diorite Stone,[10] an intransigently physical phenomenon, a concretion of energy. When the human is viewed thus, as an energy formation which albeit highly structured or organized, is of a kind with all other organisms, a respect for and duty towards the earth become inevitable. Whitehead's metaphysic bestows weight

and substance on the concern for the earth so important in the work of Olson and his followers, an interest very much in keeping with the more general ecological concern of our time.

In Projective Verse Olson describes "objectism", his reconditioned version of "objectivism".

'Objectism' is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the subject and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and these other creatures of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects. For a man is himself an object, whatever he may take to be his advantages, particularly at that moment that he achieves an humilitas sufficient to make him of use.

It comes to this: the use of a man, by himself and thus by others, lies in how he conceives his relation to nature, that force to which he owes his somewhat small existence. If he sprawl, he shall have little to sing but himself, and shall sing, nature has such paradoxical ways, by way of artificial forms outside himself. But if he stays inside himself, if he is contained within his nature as he is participant in the larger force, he will be able to listen, and his hearing through himself will give him secrets objects share. And by an inverse law his shapes will make their own way. It is in this sense that the projective act, which is the artist's act in the larger field of objects, leads to dimensions larger than the man.[11]

As well as repossessing man of his world, as we have remarked, Whitehead's philosophy restores full dignity and importance to the act of physical perception. Indeed perception and objectification are the modes by which an entity prehends concrescences, achieves itself. Physical perception is a feeling, the way one entity actually <u>is</u> in another; problems of appearance and illusion are removed because the image is real. Deception, error and delusion enter at the conceptual level; the senses do not deceive.

There is, however, always this limitation to the security of direct knowledge, based on direct physical feeling, namely, that the creative emergence can import into the physical feelings of the actual world pseudo-

determinants which arise from the concepts entertained in that actual world, and not from the physical feelings in that world. This possibility of error is peculiarly evident in the case of that special class of physical feelings which belong to the mode of 'presentational immediacy'.[12]

"Presentational immediacy" is how we perceive the world:

It is a physical feeling - ... of a complex type to the formation of which conceptual feelings, more primitive physical feelings, and transmutation have played their parts amid processes of integration. Its objective datum is a nexus of contemporary events under the definite illustration of certain quantities and relations: these quantities and relations are prehended with the subjective form derived from the primitive physical feelings, thus becoming our private physical sensations. Finally, as in the case of all physical feelings, this complex derivative physical feeling acquired integration with the valuation inherent in its conceptual realization as a type of experience.[13]

So we know the world through our senses; an artist's duty is to refine his sensibility, cleanse "the doors of perception", and to examine his own perceptions and values so that he will be able to increase the richness, intensity and accuracy of his knowledge. The "lyric interference of the ego", or subjectivism, one source of distortion condemned by the Objectivists and by Olson, becomes much less threatening if one accepts Whitehead's account of the ego and personality as a wandering and discontinuous route of presiding occasions:

Thus in an animal body the presiding occasion, if there be one, is the final node or intersection, of a complex structure of many enduring objects. Such a structure pervades the human body. The harmonized relationships of the parts of the body constitute the wealth of inheritance into a harmon y of contrasts, issuing into intensity of experience. The inhibitions of opposites have been adjusted into the contrasts of opposites. The human mind is thus conscious of its body inheritance. There is also an enduring object formed by the inheritance from presiding occasion to presiding occasion. The endurance of the mind is only one more example of the general principle on which the body is constructed. This route of presiding occasions probably wanders from part to part of the brain, dissociated from the physical material atoms. But central personal dominance is only partial, and in pathological cases is apt to vanish.[14]

Such a description of personality may evoke two responses, the first a passive willingness to be part of nature, the second the unrelenting assertion of the self, of "actual willful man".[15] Olson oscillated between the two, but predominantly he sought to create himself, to achieve the fullest intensity of self:

> What weeds
> as an explanation
> leaves out, is
> that chaos
> is not our condition
>
> not that relaxation[16]

Man's duty, task or function, as Olson sees it, is to act, impose his will and therefore order and form on his universe. But his capacity for order or for intensity of satisfaction depends on his knowledge, knowledge which derives from the actual experienced world. Olson describes human activity in terms of a concrescence, experiencing, prehending and reaching satisfaction, a satisfaction which never really is since it precipitates a new urge to creation.

> But such a satisfied man is never possibly the trope Man. The trope Man, like the sliding concept Chaos - the trope Man is only the creature at the second stage of feeling, which amounts to no more than the creature crowing over his own triumph, over incoherence. It is not the thing man when he has the thing in hand, which is every one of us in face of satisfaction. And at that point any man or woman recedes as God does from his creation. And for a good reason: that he or she or Him must then go on to another creation. The very motive powers, enjoyment and desire, demand it.[17]

The creation or discovery of order is art. Olson argues from Whitehead and Heisenberg that we have moved away from the search for order immanent in the world, for natural laws which we could apply to man as well as the rest of creation; instead, we realize that order proceeds just as much from man, not only from his mental, but also from his physical constitution. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle emphasizes the role of the observer in what is observed while Whitehead stresses the importance of the bodily senses:

> It is the accepted doctrine in physical science that a living body is to be interpreted according to what is known of other sections of the physical universe. This is a sound axiom; but it is double-edged. For it carries with it the converse deduction that other sections of the universe are to be interpreted in accordance with what we know of the human body.[18]

If order derives from the human, the highest or most conscious ordering is that of art

> art was never any more, and can be nothing other than the order of man, specifically man, and not nature, not history, not a creator God but simply man's own powers of imposing form on content.[19]

From, however, in Olson's interpretation, is achieved through action, action which proceeds from knowledge:

> What you do is precisely defined by what you know. Which is not reversible, and therein lies the reason why context is necessary to us; it is only when one can say either (if it is the person's life) here is a perfect thing or (if it is a created thing - which every act is, by its very source as rising from one of us) here is form.
>
> Now neither are ever attainable. Or, to put it the right way, when either perfection or form is achieved, it is already imperfect or less than the necessary form by the very fact of coming into its own existence it has pushed the limit of possibility by its own achievement.[20]

The entity in concrescence prehends every other entity, negatively or positively; in other words, it can be said to know everything. The degree of form, intensity or satisfaction achieved will depend on how the entity organizes itself.

The organization of physical perceptions is determined by subject aim which proceeds from the eternal objects or forms. The more highly developed is mentality or consciousness the greater possibility will there be for intensity of satisfaction. The most general subjective aim or the lure of creativity is determined by the final or prospective ordering of the eternal objects as they are found in the primordial nature of God.

In this theory of poetics process is pre-eminent. Achieved forms perish but become immortal: their value is their availability for the present instants of the universe. Art is interpreted with an analogous to every other form of action. Like Hulme, Olson sought, as artist, to plunge into the flux of duration:

> And what I write
> is stopping the battle
>
> to get down, right in the midst of
> the deeds, to tell
>
> what this one did, how
> in the fray, he made this play, did grapple
> with that one, how
> his eye flashed
>
> to celebrate
> (beauty will not wait)[21]

However, for Olson, the poet's action is one with that of the soldier; the poem is as much the act of writing as the final outcome, just as, for Whitehead, an entity is its becoming plus its outcome. In Olson's case, this results in an emphasis on the man who is poet as an entity. In his pursuit of history he identifies history with life, "a life is the historical function of the individual. History is the intensity of the life process - its life value".[22] The historian's art is to order or value the experience, to discern the form or mythology which, according to Olson,is the prospective or final cause of action, the lure of creativity. Olson equated myth with Whitehead's eternal objects or Platonic forms. Using Aristotle's definition of myth as "the ordering of the incidents" we can see myth as the bones on which history puts the flesh. Historical events pass away with process but they obey or re-enact the mythical forms which at once constitute them and are preserved by them. Thus history is commemorative and prospective.

Olson's own personality led him to interpret Whitehead with a certain bias. He emphasized the place of will, the poem as the action of man making himself. The notion of field appealed to him because it presented the alternative to Pound's "ego as beak" and gave him

the ego as centre. Historical time as we commonly conceive it is abolished by the space-time continuum in which all entities and events are available for prehension and where the actual entity is the process and outcome of their ordering. At the same time, this theory is an advance from the concepts of universals and particulars, since everything is actually present in every other thing.[23] Thus not only must the artist deal in particulars, it is impossible for him to do anything else. In the poem every image is both particular and universal, particular in the how of its organization, universal in the what that is organized.

Olson's poetics have afforded a precept and his own Maximus Poems an example of the possibilities for the long poem, for post-modern epic. The concepts of process, of actualities becoming and perishing, demand that the poem be extended, indeed be co-extensive with the poet's life, while the notion of open field allows for an inclusion of narrative and a use of myth and history which can be non-linear, creative and prospective. The poem prehending forms of energy and ordering them achieves new intensities which become available for prehension by further actualities. The poet is restored to the centre of the tribe as teacher and seer while the poem becomes once again the vehicle for the tribal ethos.

Whitehead and Olson's interpretation of Whitehead have clearly been of significance for contemporaries including Robert Duncan and Edward Dorn, whose work forms the subject of the latter part of this thesis. For both of them, Whitehead has provided an intellectual stiffening. Whitehead's metaphysics are difficult and Olson's idiosyncratic rendering of these cannot be considered a simplification. Duncan, an established poet before Olson ever published, and perhaps one of the most osmotic or eclectic writers the century has produced, seems to have absorbed Whitehead's cosmology,

with its Platonic affinities, into his own peculiar meld of neo-Platonism, Gnosticism and theosophy. Dorn, Olson's student at Black Mountain, was freed by him to write "unpoetically" and at length, to concern himself with economics, geography, sociology and politics as subjects for poetry. However, though Projective Verse and what it stood for became a rallying-point for a generation of writers, the best have taken what they needed from Olson, or from Whitehead, and then followed their own paths, looked in other directions. Olson's certainty, his overall optimism, his insistence on being energetic, his advocacy of a work ethic close to that of the Puritans so ambivalently treated in his poetry; all these are not necessarily appealing to other poets. Besides, poetry moves on with the world and new poems are informed by new philosophies.

Structuralism, phenomenology, existentialism and their variants, the fashionable European philosophies, have exerted their influence in American intellectual circles; much more so than in Britain where the force of British empiricism and the "common sense" of positivism still acts a repressive force. One of the seminal influences in European philosophy, but one which has till recently been by and large ignored in Britain, is the work of Martin Heidegger. His ideas have been of particular importance in relation to language and poetry and it can be shown that they have considerable relevance to projective verse, open form or field poetry, and that reference to his writings can throw considerable light on the poetry of Robert Duncan and Edward Dorn.

Dorn of course acknowledges Heidegger as one of his masters in Gunslinger and has said that Heidegger's mind is "equal to the poem".[24] Duncan does not, as far as I know, anywhere acknowledge a direct debt to Heidegger although he does not reject the conclusions of Rich Blevins's Heideggerian interpretation in IO 19.[25] It

would be curious if a man of Duncan's erudition and facility had not absorbed, at least at second-hand, a modicum of Heidegger's thinking. Certainly, he had declared a knowledge of and affinity with such European philosophers as Merleau-Ponty and Roland Barthes, whose writings in different respects are related to and influenced by those of Heidegger.

In many ways, Heidegger's thought runs parallel with that of Whitehead, though the emphases are different. Both allow that we already know everything, but where Whitehead seeks intensity of organisation, Heidegger seeks authenticity through interpretation. Whitehead's creativity, the urge which drives entities to seek satisfaction and which causes successive entities to arise corresponds to Heidegger's notion that the quest for understanding of Being is peculiar and integral to Dasein, that is, to man.

> Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather, it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being that Being is an issue for it. The task of an intellectual analytic of Dasein has been delineated in advance, as regards both its possibility and its necessity in Dasein's ontical constitution.[26]

This is also corresponds to Olson's response in The Special View of History:

> What makes us want to, a Lady asked me. It is what I mean by no choice. History is to want to. It is the built-in.[27]

This built-in driving force is the need to discover, or remember the Logos, the primordial nature of God. Heidegger conceived of man as not only ontological but historical and therefore historiological. He posits that the essence of Dasein is its temporality, its finitude, its historicity. We exist between birth and death:

> Dasein traverses the space of time granted to it between the two boundaries and it does so in such a way that, in each case, it is "actual" only in the "now", and hops, as it were, through the sequence of "nows" of its own "time". Thus it is

said that Dasein is "temporal". In spite of the constant changing of these experiences, the Self maintains itself throughout with a certain self-sameness...

Dasein does not fill up a track or stretch of life - one which is somehow present-at-hand - with the phases of its momentary actualities. It stretches itself along in such a way that its own Being is constituted in advance as a stretching-along. The "between" which relates to birth and death already lies in the Being of Dasein...

The specific movement in which Dasein is stretched along and stretches itself along, we call it "historizing".[28]

Dasein existing authentically is futural, admitting its ultimate possibility, which is death, but to discover the full extent of that possibility we must recapitulate the past and all the possibilities of the past. Heidegger anticipates Olson in going behind Plato and Aristotle to the early Greeks and their understanding of Being and Truth. He belived that the present Judaeo-Christian epoch was dying in a barbarism of technology stemming from the development of Western metaphysics. In Olson's words "The Way does die" and it is the duty of Dasein to recapitulate, go back, rediscover other ways, paths not taken:

To understand this tragic process, and to realize that false technicity has edged the human race to the brink of ecological devastation and political suicide, is to realize that salvation is possible. It is precisely because exploitative technology and the worship of allegedly objective science are the natural culmination of Western metaphysics after Plato, that the Heideggerian summons "to overcome metaphysics" is, simultaneously and quintessentially, a summons to "the saving of the earth".[29]

Heidegger described this need to go back, to study the history of ideas, to discover what has gone wrong, to escape from our received, inauthentic ideas of everyday existence as "interpretation". Interpretation is an aspect of ontology and an aspect of care, and thus of the nature of Dasein. Interpretation of history is the way in which we understand Being and our desire to

understand Being is part of our care, our inevitable concern for the world into which we are thrown, for the rest of creation which we find ourselves alongside. Heidegger's philosophy as much as Whitehead's gives us man as "centre and circumference", as a creature who only exists as he exists in a world, in a context of space-time, and who therefore takes on responsibility for that world.

Heidegger's method, "To the things themselves".[30] is derived from Husserl and is avowedly phenomenological. There are many different varieties of phenomenology, but from Husserl to Merleau-Ponty one methodological characteristic persists: the rejection of abstract theory, concepts and generalizations and a concentration on that which can be learned from the direct experience of consciousness, from the objects themselves as they are perceived. This insistence on what Whitehead has termed "presentational immediacy" has obvious affinities with Imagism, "Direct treatment of the thing, whether subject or object", with Williams, "No ideas but in things" and Olson:

> ...discourse has arrogated to itself a good deal of experience which needed to stay put - needs now to be returned to the only two universes which count, the too phenomenal ones, the too a man has need to bear on because they bear so on him; that of himself, as organism, and that of his environment, the earth and planets.[31]

However, while phenomenology insists on a return to the "things themselves" it avoids the pitfalls of mere empiricism which snared some of the more naive Imagists, over zealous in their pursuit of objectivity. Phenomena, in all their particularity and reality, are to be regarded as the products of mental and physical interaction.

Moreover, the category of phenomena extends beyond the physical. Heidegger regards the appearances of the physical world as primary phenomena, but he also treats language and words phenomenologically. If physical phenomena are first-order expressions of the Logos, or

of creativity, then language, or discourse, is second-order expression, that which lets something be seen

> Logos is "discourse"... to make manifest what one is "talking about" in one's discourse. Aristotle has explicated this function of discourse more precisely as _apophainesthai_. The _Logos_ lets something be seen (phanesthai), namely, what the discourse is about [32]

This passage could be a gloss for a section of _The Maximus Poems_:

> The soul is a magnificent Angel
> And the thought of its thought is the rage
> of ocean _apophainesthai_
>
> roared the great bone on to Norman's
> Woe; _apophainesthai_, as it blew
> up a pool on Pound Rock shoal;
> _apophainesthai_ it cracked as it broke
> on Pavilion Beach apophainesthai
> it tore at Watch House Point
>
> apophainesthai
> got hidden all the years
> apophainesthai: the soul
> in its progressive rise
>
> ... ...
>
> it sends out
> on the path and the Angel
> it will meet
>
> apophainesthai
> its accent is its own mirage.[33]

Language and physical phenomena are the expression of being; but everyday usage has obscured the primordial truths which language expresses and this can only be revealed by the attempt to interpret language, to study etymology, to regard language as containing a gamut of possibilities which everyday, inauthentic living has covered up. This notion of language or Logos as the expression of primordial truth of Being can be traced back to Gnostic and Hermetic doctrines. The primary agent for salvation becomes the poet, for it is he who takes on the task of using language correctly, of interpreting language with language, or of writing in such a way as to conform with the truth of the Logos:

> Die Sprache spricht, nicht der Mensch. Der Mensch spricht nur, indem er geschicklich der Sprache entspricht (Language speaks, Man speaks only insofar as he complies artfully with language) [34]

The poet becomes the servant of language, living authentically as Dasein, a being in the world, caring for the world. The dangers of egotism and solipsism are avoided. Language is the hermetic embodiment of truth and possibility; the poet moves into the field of hermeneutics, interpreting the past for the sake of the future.

In the following passage where Robert Duncan is replying to Blevin's Heideggerian analysis of his work, his own reading of Whitehead is also apparent. This merging of two apparently disparate philosophies, those of Heidegger and Whitehead, while it might not satisfy the strict philosopher, has proved of use to Duncan and, indeed, to Edward Dorn:

> Rich writes that in Heidegger's analysis, Dasein may interpret all of its ways of behaving as "concern", is concerned with interpreting. We are initially translators then; and in coming into our native speech learn that language as we translate ourselves into language. We did then come from another world for sure. And the problems of translation are not secondary to our being native.
>
> The situation is not ambiguous in the sense that it does not tell us clearly what ways it will go. It does tell what ways it will go, so that we are potentially surprised in the determination of the way that emerges and pleased because it verifies among our expectations the presence that can be determined of a particular way. We take identity in the thought of its assertion. The quality of the actual... its irreversibility, its imposition as necessary condition of our engagement with all that is... all this heightens the field of probabilities in which it arose.
>
> "Other" ways have deepend or thinned values of being, background, rejection, resonance, conflict of attention entirely in relation to the actual path. We "realize" that we have taken the path we have. It is not redundant. It is not <u>given</u>. But every alternative is kept alive in the recognition of this way being taken in the actual. [35]

Heidegger's hermeneutic interpretation is derived from Dilthey who himself took the term from Friedrich

Schliermacher, the religious philosopher.[36] In hermeneutics understanding and interpretation is conducted from within; the whole is understood in terms of its parts, the parts in terms of the whole. In metaphysics it leads Heidegger to what he acknowledges may be considered a vicious circle:

> When it is objected that the existential Interpretation is "circular", it is said that we have "presupposed" the idea of existence and of Being in general, and that Dasein gets interpreted accordingly, so that this idea of Being may be obtained from it.[37]

But Heidegger argues that this circularity is inevitable and of the nature of Dasein. The task is to move, through interpretation, from inauthentic knowledge to authentic knowledge. In our practical everyday life we assume a knowledge of Being in everything we do. It it part of our nature not only to assume existence but to project possibilities for existence. As we advance towards these possibilities in everyday life, so in hermeneutics the projected possibilities of existence are articulated so that they move from possibility to actuality.

Thus Heideggerian hermeneutics are at once the art of language and the art of the possible. The poet can lead us from uncritical assumption to new understanding, from indefinite potential to real possibilities. He works within language for he cannot move outside it, yet he is saved from idealism by the concepts of Dasein as temporal Being-in-the-World, a fact in space-time, and of Being itself as real. Language is usually real - a second-order phenomenon or expression of Being - and it is by the reinterpretation of language, by the restoration of pristine meanings and possibilities, by what Robert Duncan would call the discovery of the real within the actual, by looking to the past in this manner, that we are enabled to understand and move towards the future. Authentic existence would be the total and unrelenting pursuit of this interpretation, for the poet

an unswerving commitment to writing; but this service to language must always be conducted in the finite succession of "nows" and in the full awareness of the ultimate limiting condition, one's own death. This death, which we cannot go beyond and which must be faced with resolution, reveals that the real possibilities are all to be discovered in the past, in history and in language: to deny death is to deny reality, to misinterpret and reject possibilities. In our practical everyday lives most of the time we live inauthentically according to preconceived ideas and unexamined expectations of the future which because they evade death distort the truth.

This version of the existentialist analytic need not be, as Creeley and Olson complained, "an awfully sad way to think".[38] Like Whitehead, Heidegger provides a free and responsible role for man; but in his philosophy, man is men, bounded by their own life-spans, local in space-time, with a duty towards Being, a care for Being, which they must interpret within the real understanding of their own finite Being. At the same time, the recognition that each of us only does live in the "now" and that the past, although it contains all possibilities, is unreal and need not constrain us, can, in theory, if we can escape our everyday commitments, set us free to act. Responsible action is the equivalent of Whitehead's "real potential": all entities or possibilities may be in theory prehensible by the actual event, but, in fact, real potential is determined by the organism's proximate environment, the complexity of its own organization and the intensity of its subjective aim.

In his later work, Heidegger became more and more interested in the role of the poet and in philosophy as essentially poetic, essentially creative and projective. He talks about "thinking" as a "Way" and likens it to the eastern concept of "Tao"; but the idea also bears considerable resemblance to the "field" of the projective poets.

> Going over the paths of this region, thinking occupies itself with and dwells on the region. Here the way is part of the region, a relationship between the two which, from the point of the view of scientific representation, is not only difficult but altogether impossible to see.[39]

Thinking is poetry in the widest sense, poetry as projective saying, poetry as creative, "Poetry is the instituting of Being by means of the Word". This thinking, this creativity does not stem from the individual but may be voiced by him, if he adapt his proper stance, OLson's "humilitas" or Duncan's obedience to the Masters of Rime.

> Thinking in this sense is identical with creative utterance, though this creativity comes, Heidegger insists, not from the assertive will of man but from his surrender to the voice of Being.[40]

Duncan's poetics allow him, as poet, to live entirely in the realm of language, listening for the real as it moves in the actual. In the next chapter we shall consider how his metaphysical and religious though is related to, or constituent of, his long poem Passages and his treatment therein of themes of history and myth.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1 Robert von Hallberg, "Olson, Whitehead and the Objectivists" in Boundary 2, II,1& 2 (1974) pp.85-110.

2 Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (London, 1929, reprinted New York, 1969) p.128.

3 Process and Reality, p.245.

4 See previous chapter.

5 Process and Reality, p.28.

6 Process and Reality, p.92.

7 Walter Pater, The Renaissance (London, 1893) p.251.

8 See especially essays in The Human Universe, (New York, 1967).

9 Walter Pater, Appreciations (London, 1895) p.270-271.

10 See Maximus IV, V & VI (London, 1970).

11 Poetics of the New American Poetry, (New York, 1973) p.156.

12 Process and Reality, p.298.

13 Process and Reality, p.366.

14 Process and Reality, p.129.

15 Charles Olson, The Special View of History, p.16.

16 Charles Olson, The Maximus Poems (London, 1960) Letter 23.

17 The Special View of History, p.52.

18 Process and Reality, p.140.

19 Process and Reality, p.140

20 The Special View of History, p.29

21 The Maximus Poems, Letter 22.

22 The Special View of History, p.18.

23 "The antithetical terms 'universals' and 'particulars' are the usual words employed to denote respectively entities which nearly, but not quite, correspond to the entities here termed 'eternal objects' and 'actual entities'. These terms, 'universals' and 'particulars', both in the suggestiveness of the two words and in their current philosophical use, are somewhat misleading. The ontological principle and the wider doctrine of universal relativity, on which the present metaphysical discussion is founded, blur the sharp distinction between what is universal and what is particular. The notion of a universal is of that which can enter into the description of many particulars; whereas the notion of a particular is that it is described by

universals, and does not itself enter into the description of any other particular. According to the doctrine of relativity which is the basis of the metaphysical system of the present lectures, both these notions involved a misconception. An actual entity cannot be described, even inadequately, by universals; because other actual enttities do enter into the description of any one actual entity. Thus every so-called 'universal' is particular in the sense of being just what it is, diverse from everything else; and every so-called 'particular' is universal in the sense of entering into the constitution of other actual entities". Process and Reality, p.62.

24 Edward Dorn, Interview with Barry Alpert, Vort I, (Fall, 1972) p.15.

25 Rich Blevin, "Two Poems and an Essay" IO/19 (Vermont 1974) pp.16-28.

26 Martin Heidegger, Being and Time translated by John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford, 1978) p.32.

27 The Special View of History, p.28.

28 Being and Time, p.425-427.

29 George Steiner, Heidegger, Fontana Modern Masters, (Glasgow, 1978) p.134.

30 Being and Time, p.28.

31 Charles Olson, "Human Universe" in Human Universe and other essays (New York, 1967) p.4.

32 Being and Time, p.56.

33 Maximus IV, V & VI, n.p.

34 Jonathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics, (London, 1975) p.29.

35 Robert Duncan, "Reading Rich Blevin's Essay ... and Thinking of Pound's Cantos" in IO/19, p.29.

36 See J.L. Mehta, The Philosopy of Martin Heidegger, (New York, 1971) pp.17-18.

37 Being and Time, p.315.

38 See The Special View of History, Back Cover.

39 From "Unterwegs zur Sprache" quoted by Mehta, p.58.

40 Mehta, p.64.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ROBERT DUNCAN AND PASSAGES

Robert Duncan's career as a poet coincides almost exactly with the developments in poetic theory from Imagism to Projective Verse. His early influences included Pound, Gertrude Stein and, of course, H.D., while today he remains abreast of contemporary movements, entering into dialogue with the structuralists and Heideggerians. Duncan occupies a central position in contemporary American literature and his most ambitious poem, the series Passages, must be regarded as a major and representative work.

However, certain reservations need to be made in relation to Duncan's work. He must surely be one of the most intellectually gifted of recent writers, brilliant in his fluent versatility and verbal facility, in his ability to grasp and counter an argument, to assimilate, adopt or adapt a theory, in his capacity to absorb and transmute heterogeneous and esoteric material. But this very facility both in technique and in criticism allows him to appear as all things to all men; his work has the chameleon-like quality of conforming to whatever hypothesis or reading strategy one chooses to bring to it. Moreover, his way with words, his mellifluence, his prolixity both in verse and in prose can distract the reader and beguile the poet even in those critical writings where we might expect rigour of argument. In fairness to Duncan, an awareness of the snares of "lovely, lying muthos", the problem of Plato and the poets, remains a continuing theme and tension in the poet's work.

However, though Duncan reflects the innovations of his times he is not himself an innovator. He commits himself to the service of poetry, the service of the "Master of Rime" and so renounces, to some extent, the necessary wilfulness of the innovator. Instead, he seeks the role of the shaman or bard, hoping to speak

from the hearth stone, the lamp light,
the heart of the matter where the
house is held. [1]

As the bard, the preserver of the tradition of the race, he cannot reject the past or even parts of the past as other avant garde writers might like to do. Consequently his concept of open form is more accommodating than that of the purists:

... if open form were a correction of closed form, okay. And in Olson's proposition it sounds like that. But I find that superfluous. Would you want to go back and correct, let's say Housman? What do you think you would arrive at? Actually the open thing is really to enclose any closed form. Any passage or anything else can be contained as part of a large open form. The essential recognition in open form is that every event in poetry has its form in reference to the total feeling of the formality of the language. [2]

Duncan is thus a traditionalist as much as he is a member of the avant garde, a "modern" as much as he is a "post-modern", and while he may owe some of this thought to Olson and Whitehead he is equally indebted to the ideas of Darwin and Whitman. Though he acknowledges the reality of the actual, material present, his sympathies are with a higher, transcendent reality, akin to Platonic idealism. We shall discover throughout his work a yearning for a transcendental ideal world to set against the world of actuality and a desire to interpret the actual, the phenomenological, in terms of ideal forms. In Duncan's own terminology, this is the discovery of the "real" in the "actual", the extrapolation of myth from history. Duncan seeks to legitimate this desire for the ideal through his philosophy of process in which, of course, he is strongly influenced by Whitehead. In this vision, the only reality is the instant, the ideal forms are unreal, the transcendental world the lure for creativity which if it should be approached in an intensity of satisfaction is as immediately lost again. The intensity of the moment, the degree of its "reality", lies in the extent to which it has achieved a realisation of form.

Though Whitehead is important for this poetics of evolutionary process, the influence of Whitman is perhaps almost as significant. In this passage, taken from a major critical essay, Duncan discusses Whitman in terms he might have used of himself:

> Whitman did not believe he came at the end of a civilisation but at the beginning, at the apprehension of what was to come. He does not represent his time but announces its coming. "America", for Whitman, is yet to come. And this theme of what America is, of what democracy is, of what the sexual reality is, of what the Self is, rises from an urgency in the conception of the Universe itself, not a blueprint but an evolution of spirit in terms of variety and a thicket of potentialities. His own work in poetry he sees so, moved by generative urgencies toward the fulfillment of a multitude of latent possibilities. And so we are actually in the throes; the throes in which the ideal and the reality are at work - now that's something to lecture from, to talk from, not recollections in tranquillity, nor summations of study, but, to be in the throes of a poetry in which the poet seeks to keep alive as a generative possibility a force and intent hidden in the very beginning of things, long before the beginning of the poem, the Leaves of Grass, having its form not, as the Divina Commedia had, as the paradigm of an existing eternal form, but as the everflowing, ever Self-creative ground of a process in which the forces of awareness, Self awareness, of declaration and of longing work and rework in the evolution of what they are, the evolution of a creative intention that moves not towards the satisfaction of some prescribed form but towards the fulfillment of a multitude of possibilities out of its seed.[3]

Duncan has constantly reiterated his belief in process as the ultimate reality, and in his phrase, "the throes in which the ideal and the reality are at work" we see how he avoids the dangers of dualism. In Passages and throughout his mature work, Duncan shuttles between the extremes of idealism and materialism, immanence and transcendence, structure and chaos. The strengths and weaknesses in his poetry proceed from this struggle to contain contradictions, the continuing attempt to match inner to outer, to respond to the actual in such a way as to achieve intensifications of reality.

> Let there be the clack of the shuttle flying
> forward and back, forward and
> back.[4]

The image of the shuttle and of weaving is a crucial one for it is a model of the poem as it is created from the movement backwards and forwards between poles but also onwards through time so that no position is ever simply repeated, but rather is recapitulated and made new.

In Duncan's cosmology, order is the constant process of disorder and reordering, and this also he views as the only possible basis for poetry:

> The process of Poetry is the incorporation of an event in language. That we take that event at all to be "Poetry", i.e. Making, or Creation, means that we take a body to be of a creational order. Not until, with the reawakening of the Spirit of Romance (where Pound's study remains fundamental for us), the theology of an initial model creation disrupted in a fall and suffering, an eschatological history, gives way to a theology in process, i.e. of a God making Love, making himself actual and real does "Poetry" proper become possible.[5]

Process as the principle of rationality underlying all flux and change becomes the principle of order within the poem. It is a dynamic order established through the tensions of multiple opposites and the controlled wayward-ness of organic growth. This is the principle announced in "In Place of a Passage 22":

> That Freedom and the Law are identical
> And are the nature of Man - Paradise. [6]

That Paradise is the reality of the moment in its greatest intensity; the summation of the concrescence as it prehends itself from all potentiality. It is Freedom as it offers the possibilities of movement along the spiralling path into the unknown; the Law as the working out of process from all the determinations of the past.

It is against this background that we must consider Passages as a poem of open form.

> Passages of a poem larger than the book in which they appear follow a sentence read out of Julian. I number the first to come one, but they belong to a series that extends in an area larger than my work in them. I enter the poem as I entered my own life, moving between an initiation and a terminus I cannot name. [7]

We recognise here a sense of the poem as historical, in Heidegger's sense: it takes up time. [8] We are also provided with an insight into Duncan's policy of revision, or rather of not revising. We know, of course, that Duncan has made some revisions. The comparison of editions and his own accounts of his habits or composition tell us that. But by and large, when his work reaches typescript, he lets it stand. Moreover, he rarely suppresses a poem or part of a poem, even when, later he has come to regard it as an embarrassment. "Often I must force myself to remain responsible to the error that sticks in pride's craw, not to erase it, but to bring it forward, to work with it, even if this flaw mar a hoped-for success".[9] Such a policy might be regarded as an excuse for shoddy workmanship, or even as the manifestation of an excessive self-importance which overvalues even its mistakes. However, it is probably more instructive to view it as a practice consistent with process poetics and as a form of loyalty to the truth. Since every response, no matter how mistaken, happens and has its moment of actuality, it becomes a historical fact. To suppress such a fact is to impoverish the potential from which the present prehends itself. In process poetics the emphasis is on the poem in composition, which is new but at the same time a recapitulation, a re-apprehension of what has gone before. So in reality, the refusal to revise is at the same time a declaration that all composition is revision. We may discover a wider significance in the old saw, "you never finish a poem; you simply put it down". The poem is put down, to be taken up by the same poet or another, by writer or reader, and is "revised" by being included in that later individual moment. In this sense, the openness or closedness of a particular poem's form, is not to be measured by the regularity of its metres or end-rhymes but by its value and accessibility for the present. Nor should we forget that the possibility of access may be created as much by the present reader as by the poetic work, in his willingness, for instance, to learn Old English so as to read "The Dream of the Rood", or to study classical mythology in order to appreciate Greek drama.

We have emphasised Duncan's notion of process poetics as historical, particularly in relation to composition. But we must also give attention to that aspect of his theory of open form which includes the notion of "a poetry of all poetries", the "grand collage". This notion of the whole of literature as a transcendental realm of language is complementary to, not contradictory of, the historical view. This concept of a total poetry would seem to have affinities with Roland Barthes's theory of the"ideal text":

> Let us first posit the image of a triumphant plural, unimpoverished by any constraint of representation (of imitation). In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilises extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable (meaning here is never subject to a principle of determination, unless by throwing dice); the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language. [10]

One of the differences between Barthes and Duncan is determined by the fact that the former is the reader, the latter the writer. Barthes is thus discussing the "readerly" text, the "fait accompli", the decisions which have reduced possibilities and pluralities of meaning. Duncan, on the other hand, engaged with the "writerly" text, is striving, though the goal is an impossible one, to achieve the pluralism, the total polysemism of the ideal text. This "ideal" may be likened to an open field with the particular poem as one path in it; or else we may image it as a sheet of paper scattered with dots. Some of the dots may be joined in a line; this we might imagine as the sequence of Passages. The line may intersect with other lines, new dots may appear, creating new possibilities of links and intersections. Thus Passages intersects with other poems and series in Bending the Bow, most significantly with Duncan's other major series, The Structure of Rime".[11] We might view the field or the page as Potentiality, transcendental but unreal; the joined line is the history of each poem, its determined past. Or to put it in Whitehead's

terminology: the poem in creation is the actual event in concrescence; in completion it becomes the enduring object. The aim or lure of each poem is the total poem, the completed Logos, i.e. Whitehead's"Category of the Ultimate" or God.

Duncan has acknowledged his affinities with Barthes and Merleau-Ponty.[12] There is no firm evidence that he has read much Heidegger, who exerted a strong influence on both these writers. Nevertheless many of Heidegger's ideas seem very close to Duncan's conception of poetics. His understanding of the search for the meaning of Being as "Care" may be identified with the poet's task to reveal the Logos, to discover Truth. Heidegger's concept of Truth (alethea) as that which is to be discovered is closer to that of Duncan, or indeed the Gnostics, than it is to conventional post-Aristotelian thought where truth is a matter of judgement, or being equal to the facts.

Duncan writes in The Truth and Life of Myth:

> For my parents, the truth of things was esoteric (locked inside) or occult (masked by) the apparent, and one needed a "lost" key in order to piece out the cryptogram of who wrote Shakespeare or who created the universe and what his real message was ...
>
> Truth was for my parents primordially and spiritually dangerous. The Gnosis, like Eden and the Original Creation Itself, had once been perfect and complete - a simple sentence - "good" as Genesis testifies. But Gnosis, Eden and Creation, the very Word, had been lost in a Fall from Grace that we know as knowledge. The sentence, no longer simple, grows apprehensive of a duplicity. It covers what it is about to say. [13]

Duncan differs from his parents' theosophical views in that for him the truth is not a "meaning behind the story" but the story itself. Duncan makes a significant distinction between theosophical and mythical thinking, identifying the former with Jung, the latter with Freud and himself. "In the philosophy of Plato or the theosophies of Plutarch, Proclus or Jung the critical mind avoids the lowness of the story and reads in high-minded

symbols".[14] He himself finds the truth of story or myth in its enactment, its presentation rather than its representation: "here Philosophy raised a dialectic, a debate, towards what it calls Truth; Poetry raised a theatre, a drama of Truth".[15]

However, as Duncan realised himself in this essay the power of mythopoeia is two-edged; the sentence covers what it is about to say:

> The secret! the secret! It's hid
> in its showing forth. [16]

We are reminded again of Heidegger's hermeneutic circle which was discussed in the last chapter. There we saw that the searcher for truth is in a sense seeking to discover what he already knows, to understand or interpret the phenomena of his experience. Thus the poet, as the principal interpreter, articulates in language the uncovering of truth, by arranging and rearranging the phenomena of his experience, of the world, of his imagination, of myth and of story. But by doing so he creates new "logoi", new stories, new fictions. Charles Olson discusses this issue in The Special View of History; his argument is worth quoting at some length for it is not only illuminating in itself but also bears considerable similarity to Heidegger's thought:

> In short the recognition (inquiry picture story) that, to get the density - WOT 'APPENED? - not so easy. Two alternatives: make your own story - fiction, or history: when you are up against it, to equal what went on. One can know what one oneself makes, but to know what happened, even to oneself? Which, then, is WHY history as the other kind of "story", that one does also want to know what did happen - I mean now. Or just five minutes ago. Or right now as it is happening. It is a stance.
>
> In other words there are TWO stances. Always are. It isn't a question of fiction versus knowing. "Lies" are necessary in both - that is the HIMagination. At no point outside a fiction can one be sure.
>
> What did happen? Two alternatives: make it up; or try to find out. Both are necessary. We inherit an either-or, from the split of science and fiction. It dates back at least to Plato, who used the word "mouth" as in insult, to say it lies, and called poets muthologists - don't tell the truth, and so mislead the Commonwealth.

Story was once all logos, the art of the logos. "The normal or characteristic function of the ancient Story Teller", says J.A.K. Thomson, from whom I draw most of this on the Logos, "was not to invent. It was to repeat". It was not mere word or even an expression of human experience so much as it was a form of human experience itself.

Because it was oral it was also Muthos. Logos itself did not originally mean "word" or "reason, or anything but merely "What is said" in speech or story exactly like Logos in its primary sense. Herodotus calls Aesop a Logopies, and is himself called by Aristotle not that, but "the Muthologos". What it all comes to is this, that to those who listened to the Stories a Muthos was a Logos, and a Logos was a Muthos. They were two names for the same thing. [17]

Heidegger also argues that "Logos" is "what is said", i.e. "discourse", therefore a "letting-something-be-seen" as something a synthesis of language and what is represented. But as it is synthesis between word and truth, rather than an identity, there enters the possibility of falsehood. [18] The difference or gap between the word and that which it stands for or is supposed to stand for makes the poet both powerful and dangerous. Fictions, as Duncan suggests, can be true or false. Only certain stories or myths are "true" in the deeper sense.

Herein lies the responsibility of the poet, for, in a remark frequently attributed to Duncan,"responsibility is the ability to respond". The poet must respond to the truth of Being, must give the poem all his attention in order to present the truth, to uncover the real in the actual:

We all have a sense of the difference between what the story demands and what the teller of the story might like the story to be. The story that has been altered to be likely or true to some belief or to be pleasing or to have some other special effect on the audience strays from its Self. So too there is a Self that belongs to Story that determines the sense of truth and life in my own daily living. The psychosis of principle of the soul life is its belonging to the reality of what we know to be true to our own story sense. In the light of the mythological, events and persons can seem true or false to the true story of who I am. [19]

Certain stories and myths are held to be vehicles of truth; thus Duncan's work abounds in references to myths,

legends, fictions and fairytales. But in what sense can these myths be said to be true? Clearly not at the simple level of content. In his epigraphs to The Truth and Life of Myth Duncan quotes a passage from Jane Harrison's Themis, a passage which, as it happens, Olson had already used in The Special View of History (p.23),

> it is the plot of the ζρομευου, for, says Aristotle, in a most instructive definition,
> by myth I mean the arrangement of the incidents.

The truth of myth lies in its order or patterning, its conformation to the deep laws of the universe; particular myths are true as they are the products or instantiations of the mythic imagination. The danger of this structuralist approach is that it reduces the critic to the search for underlying forms so that the specificity of the individual myth, poem or fiction becomes irrelevant. Truth is seen as Parmenides saw it: changeless, eternal and inaccessible. Actuality, appearances and our sensory experience are regarded as deceptive and illusory. This is a relapse into dualistic metaphysics, the essentialism which is the antithesis of process. This is what Duncan condemns as the theosophic view.

The mythologist, the mythopoeic poet, on the other hand, the poet of process insists on the reality of the present moment. The structures, forms or mythic patterns may be eternal but they are unreal, the Potential which can only become real in the actual event. The poet's task is to apprehend form, to bring forth from actuality into the poem as high a degree of reality as he can achieve. He does not seek to transcend time and history in art, the changeless perfection of Byzantium; rather he sees his work as happening in time, as a part of the historical process. The poem is the moment and it is the poet's duty to make the most of that moment:

> Each poet seeks to commune with creation, with the divine world; that is to say, he seeks the most real form in language. But this most real is something we apprehend; the poem, the creation of the poem, is itself our primary experience of it. [20]

In allowing that reality is immediate rather than transcendent, the poet of process is an imagist rather than a symbolist, an existentialist rather than an essentialist. The primary reality of the poem is the words which constitute it, not historical events, poetic inspirations or philosophical abstractions. Thus for instance, Passages 22-27, Of the War, are not about American involvement in Vietnam in the sense that that war, that historical context is held as the level of reality which references to various myths or fictions may decorate, elucidate or symbolise. The poems are the reality, prehending or including Vietnam as they prehend their other elements.

It is only by insisting on the reality of the present instant as the only reality that there is that we shall be able to understand Duncan's capacity to entertain contradictions, his ability to maintain apparently antithetical positions without any concessions of his inconsistency. This is illustrated in his treatment of Gnostic and neo-Platonic themes.

Duncan was, as we know, brought up to be familiar with the mystery religions, neo-Platonism and Gnosticism. He is widely read in Oriental and Middle Eastern philosophy and religion as well as in Kabbalism and alchemical writings. The theosophic frame of mind, though he claims to reject it, is one to which he was habituated from his earliest years. His poetry relies heavily on imagery and machinery gleaned from these sources. The Structure of Rime series, for instance, with its visions and messengers is a theory of poetics cast in the form of a Gnostic revelation.

Yet Hans Jonas has shown in The Gnostic Religion, a book of major significance for both Olson and Duncan, that Gnosticism and neo-Platonism, while they arise from the same historical circumstances and exploit many of the same mythological sources are, as cosmologies, diametrically opposed to one another. Both tendencies arose, Jonas argues, from the cosmopolitanism of the Alexandrian

period. Following the decline of the classical "polis", there was an attempt to substitute:

for the relation between citizen and city that between the individual and the cosmos, the larger living whole. By this shift of reference the classical doctrine of the whole and parts was kept in force even though it no longer reflected the practical situation of man. Now it was the cosmos that was declared to be the great "city of gods and men", and to be a citizen of the universe, a cosmopolites, was not considered to be the goal by which otherwise isolated man could set his course. He was asked, as it were, to adopt the cause of the universe as his own, that is, to identify himself with that cause directly, across all intermediaries, and to relate his inner self, his logos, to the logos of the whole. [21]

This was the positive side of cosmopolitanism which emerged as neo-Platonism, but, Jonas suggests, it failed to convince:

Does the whole really care, does it concern itself in the part that is I? The Stoics averred that it does by equating heimarmene with pronoia, cosmetic fate with providence. And does my part, however I play it, really contribute, does it make a difference to the whole? The Stoics averred that it does by their analogy between the cosmos and the city. But the very comparison brings out the tenuousness of the argument, for - in contrast to what is true in the polis - no case can be made out for my relevance in the cosmic scheme, which is entirely outside my control and in which my part is thus reduced to a passivity which in the polis it did not have. [22]

The Gnostics rejected the entire cosmos as an inimical tyranny, the gross matter in which the spiritual part of man was forcibly immersed. God, Spirit, the Good were quite outside the Cosmos, although alien and different and incapable to being known through the ordinary processes of study or investigation. Gnosis of the Divine was immediate and revelatory, a non-rational, mystical experience though it might be prepared for by study and speculation, the pursuit of secret doctrines and occult meanings. The Gnostic inspiration was radically dualist, spirit and matter being viewed not simply as different but as implacably opposed to each other. (Although one form of Gnosticism, the Valentinian speculation does derive the dualistic rift ultimately from a split in the godhead itself).[23]

Jonas himself makes a comparison between the Gnosticism of the Alexandrian period and the existentialism, nihilism and anarchism of modern times. He draws historical parallels between the two periods: the power of centralised government, the submergence of the local in the national and international, the reduction of the individual to a level of passive helplessness.

In Passages Duncan struggles with the attempt to accommodate the evil in the world with a sense of cosmic good and order. Yet as he finds the courage and the range to confront the horror of his own time it seems that his disgust and his desire to turn from the world increase. Against the disordered actuality of this world, he sets his other world, the world of language and of forms. Yet Duncan is not an idealist, he is a realist. He must reject the temptation to see the world of forms as a retreat, "Fairyland, the Shining Land", but instead recognise it as the Potential which can only become real as man, and in particular man the artist, realises it in the actual. It is in the present moment that idea and matter achieve unity and reality. Robert Duncan, like David Jones, discovers this moment in the Catholic doctrine of the moment of transsubstantiation in the Mass:

> Poetics as well as Theology is involved in the transsubstantiation in the Mass, where men have their controversy as to whether the Presence is literal, actual, or whether it is symbolic; whether, as for whose who would abstract Christ as a mere idea, it is sentimental, or, as for the positive logicians, a psychotic fancy without intelligible meaning. The declaration in the opening passages of William Carlos Williams' Paterson that has been one of the axioms of a new poetry - "No ideas but in things" - is catholic and in the spirit of Dante. [24]

This is transcendental realism and it places Duncan firmly within the American tradition stemming from the Puritans, who, Roy Harvey Pearce has argued, took to an extreme the logic of Peter Ramus:

> Ramist logic was Platonic, unitive, realistic (in the technical sense), its key terms being "invention", the "coming upon", the "laying open to view" that which was real. Its tendency was virtually to make the word one

with the thing, to consider an idea - simple or complex - as an "argument" for the existence of that which it represented, and so to abolish the abstract categories of Aristotelian logic and to give the syllogism only secondary importance. Truth, thus, has not to be deduced, but rather to be "invented" and expressed in self-evident axioms - axioms self-evident because developed from primary observation and judgement.[25]

Thus, for the Puritans as for the latter day phenomenologists, there are two languages, the language of Nature and the language made by men. Both are phenomena, forms of energy. The view of language as really effective does not necessarily contradict the notion of the Logos as discourse and synthesis discussed above. The real links between language and the physical world mean that the world is charged with meaning which is revealed when correctly matched by language. Mind and matter obey the same formal laws so that an argument correctly made will reveal the truth about the world.

This Ramist logic, as Pearce describes it, has evident affinities with Heideggerian phenomenology. For Heidegger too, the truth is to be "uncovered","laid open to view"; for Heidegger too, ontological truth can be discovered in the interrogation of language linked to primary observation. It is the poet's task, in particular, to interrogate language and the world in order to bring out their form. Duncan discusses this discovery of form, or structure, in terms of "rime". So the truth of ancient myth or legend or history lies not so much in its content, but in how it "rimes" with present experience and intensifies truth and reality. Duncan stresses the reciprocal nature of composition, the poet's task to recognise and translate form, rather than impose it:

Whatever I think of devices of the art, of metaphor and simile, of development of themes and composition, when I speak of resonances I mean that the music of the poem, a music of sounds and of meanings - awakens the mythological reality in the actual; and when I speak of form I mean not something the poet gives to things but something he receives from things.[26]

It is in the reality of the moment therefore that Word and Flesh become one; it is also in that moment that extremes meet, the moment where we are and have our being. However, the moment is only a moment, a point to be passed through, succeeded by the next. To rest in the achieved form is to fall away from reality, to lapse into decision and closed form, to shut off life and possibility.

We have already commented on Passages as a series of points of intersection. We might have recourse to Pound and describe it as a succession of nodes or vortices, moments which have no sooner reached their greatest intensity than they are past as the process of the poem and the world drive on. In Passages the life force or energy of the universe, the Principle of Creativity is identified with Love; Love as a power for order or disorder, love as it is manifest in lovers and in communities, in the constructions of homes and of cities, in the destructions of quarrels, of jealousy and of war. Duncan exploits the fluidity of syntax, the ambiguities of pun and wordplay as well as the, as it were, dimensionless quality of language itself in his exploration of Love both as he finds it in himself and as it extends beyond him into the public world.

Love can be process or product, state or disruption of state, person or abstraction. In Passages 1-24 the imagery moves between figures of structures and figures of process, as order is established amid opposing forces before being again overthrown. Thus structure is always a concentration of energy, a balance of tension, a moment of achievement which collapses or is subverted by the forward drive of the poem. Passages 1, "Tribal Memories", is itself a poem of structure, a poem whose ordered confidence will be overthrown by the deeper questioning of what follows. Yet it retains its partial truth, a truth which remains available and which will be recapitulated even in very late sections of the poem. It is as though this were a gateway, a "rite of passage" in the poet's career, marking the end of a previous stage and the beginning of a

new one. There are certainties of self and direction some of which have to be discarded if the poet is to live, develop and stay abreast of reality.

In this poem, themes from Duncan's eclectic variety of sources have been assembled and assimilated with a mature, relaxed, almost casual confidence. The poet draws on his wide knowledge of different religions and cultures and particularly on Hermetic doctrines and imagery to present an achieved cosmology. The poem itself is a City, the ideal "polis", the "City on the Hill" and also the City of God. It is the eternal city which has been lost and is projected, yet always exists. It will be actualised as it is recalled from memory by the poet, the poet who is the prophet of the city and the voice of its tribe, "the company of the living". The poet speaks for his people, but he is also the servant of the mother, Attis or the Muse:

> Mnemosyne, they named her, the
> Mother with the whispering
> feathered wings. Memory,
> the great speckled bird who broods over the
> nest of souls, and her egg,
> the dream in which all things are living,
> I return to, leaving myself. [27]

Undifferentiated and unconscious, the Logos is One inside the World Egg; as the primal urge of creativity, it diffuses itself in the phenomenal world and individual consciousnesses. But to rediscover that original unity, and further to bring that unity towards consciousness, to increase consciousness, the poet must surrender his own egotistic consciousness and return to the entire possibility held by the Muse of memory. Harold Bloom describes this myth of poetic creation, which he attributes to Vico:

> the Muse invoked under the name of Memory is being implored to help the poet remember the future. Shamans return to primordial chaos, in their terrible and total initiations in order to make fresh creation possible.[28]

These lines suggest a darker, more frightening aspect of the poet's role, emphasising the poet as shaman rather

than the poet as bard. Duncan affects to deny the part of shaman, of poet as outsider, yet through a favourite poetic device of making the language describing what is denied so forcefully that it easily overwhelms the negative, we recognise that he cannot escape the shamanistic role:

> the poet's voice speaks from no
> crevice in the ground between
> mid-earth and underworld
> breathing fumes of what is deadly to know,
> news larvae in tombs
> and twists of time do feed upon [29]

Similarly, the security of the City, of the home and the hearth is evoked, only to be undermined by the realisation that their stability is tenuous, that they are structures demanding intense energy, to be held amid the threats of disorder and darkness. We understand that this is a "remembered" mythic City, a City which is not real, but potentially to be aimed at. The poet seeks eventually to build this city, to restore the unity of the dream inside the World-Egg, but as waking consciousness. Differently imaged, this is the aim to build the Holy City or perfect society; to complete the mystical Body of Catholicism and Zoroastrianism, the Kabbalists' Adamic Man; to unite throughout the polarities of spirit and matter in the unity of the Logos.

However, there is an unreality, an abstractedness about this first poem. The atmosphere is one of bookishness and musing

> I sleep in the afternoon, retreating from work,
> reading and dropping away from the reading,
> as if I were only a seed of myself,
> unawakened, unwilling
> to sleep or wake. [30]

But these lines in themselves prepare us for disruption; the figure of Adam sleeping in the world of matter is a commonplace of Gnostic mythology. He will be wakened by the call, by the messenger who travels from the other world, the spiritual world to bring him the Gnosis. In some versions of the myth this figure is indeed the primal

Eros, the intermediate between God and man, who

hides
fire among words in his mouth
and comes racing out of the zone of dark
and storm
towards us [31]

Yet though the messenger is expected and disorder has been admitted as a condition, at this stage in the poem the wider political and cosmological themes are less convincing than the images of the more intimate, domestic world. It is as though the mythological and literary scale of disorder had not yet "rimed" with the actual as, however, they will do in Passages 13.

In these early poems the "City" remains something of a literary notion while the more fully realised, organised societies and structures are on a smaller scale, pertaining to the immediate and personal life of the individual household. So in Passages 2 it is from the immediacy of "the room where we are reading to ourselves, or I am reading aloud",[32] the domestic detail of the actual household with its purring cat that the poem evolves; the central weaving imagery, though its reference is literary and allows the implication of the Homeric theme, is itself domestic. Several of the poems concern themselves with architecture, with the actual construction of the domestic household and this interest in how the home is to be built runs alongside the struggle with erotic feeling. There is an attempt to work out or realise a love relationship which is simultaneously and inextricably involved with the poet's relationship to his art.

In Passages 9 we enter most intimately into the actual household; we are shown around what we take to be the poet's own home, allowed to read his book titles, listen to his music, assess his taste in furniture and art. We match the actual against the ideal or at least the ideal advocated by Gustave Stickley in Craftsman Homes which apparently the poet is reading as we enter. But of course, the poet's art deceives us yet again; by reducing

the four-dimensional world to language, we are led to judge the poet's taste by a book he himself has chosen, to compare the picture with one of its parts. We accept the notion of the poet reading while at the same time we know he is writing. In the realm of language different levels of language become equal; the architecture in the treatise is as real as the pepper tree in the moonlight while the legend of the Owl Sacred Pack of the Fox Indians weaves itself into the setting of the household:

> Below the house in the dark of the peppertree
> stript to the moonlight embraced
> for the mystery's sake mounting
> thru us . the garden's recesses
>
> " 'You are to make it', I told you in the past.
> I do not suppose you recognise me. 'Owl' is what
> I am called. This is how I am".
>
> They saw an owl. [33]

By putting this last line into the main text of the poem without quotation marks or italicisation, Duncan creates a bridge between the realms of actuality and of story, so that in the poem we move freely between them. Here a typographical device reinforces the ambiguity, increasing our uncertainty as to whether the owl seen was in the poet's garden or in the legend or both. A similar bridge or rime between the actual world and the text of Craftsman Homes is made by the repetition of "recesses" from the first line.

The main purpose of this poem seems to be to assert almost defiantly that a household, at least at the domestic level, does exist, that there has been some sort of approach to communion, and harmonious structure. But in Passages 10, "These Past Years", the stability of the household appears less certain:

> Willingly I'll say there's been a sweet marriage
> all the time a ring
> (if wishing could make it so) a meeting
> in mind round the moon
> means rain. [34]

The ring is the solid, visible symbol of marriage and therefore of stability in love. Yet this "ring" dissolves into evanescence and illusion "a ring around the moon", recalling the watery, insubstantial imagery in Passages 5, "The Moon", where the ambiguous values of the moon are explored, its androgynous nature, its ullusory light:

> My Lord-and-Lady Moon
> upon whom
> as if with love
> the sun at the source of light
> reflects [35]

In both poems our confidence in the reality of appearances is undermined. The moon which we perceive as light derives its brightness from the sun, which in the poem at least is not the source of light either, but only "at the source of light", suggesting that the Primal Source is the totally unknowable, the Gnostic alien God.

Returning to Passages 9, we find a literary "slant rime" with Shakespeare's Sonnet 116, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds/admit impediment". But here there has not been a "marriage of true minds", only a "sweet marriage", a ring "in mind" but not in fact. The last two words "means rain" retrospectively after the meaning of "ring" and at the same time introduce all the ideas of mutability associated with the moon, so devaluing the first line and snubbing the expectations of the lover whom we suppose is being addressed. The tone of this first paragraph is mocking, bitter, even bitchy redolent of the cruelty which emerges in lover's quarrels. A gulf has opened between the lover and his beloved and the task of the poem is to expiate the quarrel by travelling back to the lost love. But the gap has become cosmic, the distance between unredeemed man and the Gnostic messenger from the realms of light, be he Christ or be he Eros. The tempest-born traveller of Passages 1 reappears but this time in the person of the poet:

In the beginning there was weeping
an inconsolable grief
I brought . the storm I came in,
the driving rain
the night-long
torrents of wind. [36]

Clearly this is Eros bursting upon Psyche; but at the same time, we must hear an echo of Blake:

My mother groand! My father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud:
Like a fiend hid in a cloud. [37]

This latent image of helpless power underlines the central ambivalence of alternation in the poem which is further reinforced by the homosexuality, openly declared later in the series. We cannot say whether the poet is lover or beloved as he switches from passive to active principle. Tempestous and masterful as Eros in the beginning of the poem, later as the identities are reversed, he comes the figure of Psyche in her quest to rediscover the Lover she forfeited through her disobedience:

I have to make that journey,
the journey to you as if blindly again
along steps I have memorised -
not to forget, not to forget . the way
the way you are,
having no more weight nor strength to go by
than my will, my wraith,
calling up the steps . to the house, the door,
the stairs,
the hall, the room's dimensions, the
where you are [38]

Thus, as the poet recreates domestic harmony by renaming the order of the house our conciliation is effected and he can declare in sincerity "Willingly I'll say there's been a sweet marriage" and even return to the tranquillity of Craftsman Homes:

"French doors
opening out upon a porch which
links the house with the garden" [39]

But although the quarrel has been overcome and the fault expiated in the travail of the Passage, yet uncertainty

has been introduced with the suggestion of the conflict between the two natures of Eros as Love and Strife. There is a suggestion that in consoling himself with the human beloved the poet may have evaded his duty to Poetry, the First Beloved:

> the torrents
> of love-making, hiding my inconsolable grief
> in your arms. [40]

In the context of Gnosticism, inconsolable grief is experienced both by Sophia, the errant female principle of the Godhead who falls into matter, and by Adamic man as he is aware of his alienation from God. On this interpretation, love's consolations are inauthentic, the equivalent of the spirit's immersion in gross matter which the Gnostics abhorred. The poem points two ways and the struggle of the poet between beloved and First Lover achieves only a temporary resolution.

With the exception of Passages 13, to which we shall return, the series continues to explore and inter-relate the themes of love, homosexuality and poetry. As a process of self-discovery, it is history as prospective, a necessary ritual which is in itself the passage from an earlier to a later mode. Thus Passages 11, "Shadows", is a recollection of past poetic associations, previous stages in the poet's career.

In the late fifties and sixties Duncan lived in San Francisco, worked on medieval and renaissance studies at Berkeley and was active in the literary and artistic life of the city. He became intensely involved with the poetic community, both at artistic and emotional levels. His poetry of the period reflects both Romance and romanticism; like Blaser and Spicer, with whom he was partly in communion, partly in competition, Duncan was enchanted by the Romances, whether drawn from classical mythology, Arthurian legend or folk-lore. Passages 11 reflects the overheated atmosphere of a period when love and art were inextricably mingled in self-regarding fantasies derived from Spenser and Malory:

> The ear
> catches rime like the pangs of disease from the air. Was it
> sign of a venereal infection raging in the blood? For poetry
> is a contagion . And Lust a lord
> who'll find the way to make words ake and take on
> heat and glow. [41]

This is indeed love-sickness, a poem of impurity. Like Lancelot, the poet is not fit at this point for the Grail quest:

> and among these shadows
> the shadowy cap passt [42]

In Passages 12, the theme of unconsummated desire is continued with variations taken from Rimbaud and Baudelaire. Though the literary setting moves from medieval romance to the more recent late French romanticism and though there is some suggestion of a consummation of love and art, the overall tone of the poem is of langour and unreality. The contrast offered by Passages 13, "Fire" could scarcely be stronger.

At this point, Duncan moves into a new mode, a new largeness of vision and style which can include the old,

> Do you know the old language?
> I do not know the old language.
> Do you know the language of the old belief? [43]

but which brings history, art, literature into the present, so conferring relevance upon them. The erotic fantasy which has inspired the previous poems becomes the primal Eros of rage; the poet "takes fire" as he denounces the sickness of the body politic, the evil abroad in the City which is the antitype of the desired polis.

> Now, the City, impoverisht, swollen, dreams again
> the great plagues - typhus, syphilis, the black buboes
> epidemics, manias.
>
> My name is Legion and in every nation I multiply.
> Over those who would be Great Nations Great Evils. [44]

In this poem structure is shattered by the force of fire. The resolution or reconciliation which the Neo-

Platonists envisioned:

> chords and melodies of the spell that binds
> the many in conflict in contrasts of one mind [45]

simply cannot be sustained in the face of evil of this magnitude. The Christ in Bosch's painting is made to seem irrelevant, almost inconsequential:

> The Christ closes His eyes, bearing the Cross
> as if dreaming. Is His Kingdom
> not of this world, but a dream of the Anima Mundi,
> the World-Ensouling? [46]

In contrast with this dreaming other-worldliness, the poet has for the first time in the series wakened from his own dream to open his eyes, to perceive the devastation about him:

> Pan's land, the pagan countryside, they'd
> lay waste. [47]

At this moment of political recognition the poet understands that the rape of Vietnam, the disease of society, is also destructive of language and will rob him of the "old language". The words which he lays out as treasures at the beginning and end of the poem, words which have particular, primordial value will lose that value and meaning if the world they name is destroyed. There is no use a poet playing with words like "purl", "plash", "stone", "harbour", "fish", "green" if the earth is scorched, the streams polluted, the fish dead and the harbour obliterated. The world must be saved if the word is to be saved, but only a right use of language can bring us the knowledge which can save word and world. In "Fire" we move from an inauthentic deployment of treasured language, the pastoral unreality, a story that is false, to the agonised anamnesis of the close where the same words, the "anathemata", counterpoint the horror of the actual:

> They are burning the woods, the brushlands, the
> grassy fields razed. [48]

If this poem is the first occasion when we see the poet as politically resolute, it is perhaps in Passages 18 that he confronts successfully the erotic and sexual elements of the poem. It is an explicit poem; words have to be said and are said. Eros is male:

> If he be Truth
> I would dwell in the illusion of him
> His hands unlocking from the chambers of my male body
> such an idea in man's image
> rising tides that sweep me towards him
> ... homosexual? [49]

The frank acknowledgement of the homosexuality which has informed and charged the erotic force of the mythology in Duncan's poetry allows him to establish a certain order, to work out his own system after the manner of a Gnostic speculation. The ambiguities of the homosexual relationship with its possibilities of interchangeable or alternating roles rimes with the Gnostic theme of the divine messenger or redeemer sent to redeem the spark of divinity or spirit in Man. This messenger, by descending into the natural world is himself lost or immersed in matter; in other words, he exchanges his role from that of redeemer to that of him who is to be redeemed. At the same time, the Gnostic believer may work his own redemption and contribute to the reunification of the Logos, the reintegration of the Divine Spirit, by his own studies and speculations which may lead him to Gnosis, the immediate knowledge of God which is also union with God. Thus although many of the Gnostic systems appear milleniarian, worked out in terms of aeons and ages, in fact, their import is of a constant process of disintegration and mystic union where the Divine Man is fallen and dispersed in matter and simultaneously reintegrated with God in the mystic union of Gnosis. Passages 18, "The Torso", at one level an explicitly physical love poem, is also an account of the Gnostic experience as the human lover is transformed into the Divine Messenger:

> I have been waiting for you, he said:
> I know what you desire
> you do not yet know but through me .

And I am with you everywhere. In your falling
I have fallen from a high place. I have raised myself
from darkness in your rising
wherever you are
my hand in your hand seeking the locks, the keys
I am there. Gathering me, you gather
your Self .
For my Other is not a woman but a man
the King upon whose bosom let me lie. [50]

The ambiguity of role in the human sexual relationship is carried over into the Gnostic cosmology so that the protagonist appears as agent and patient, redeemer and redeemed. Duncan is enabled through the clearly painful exploration of his own sexuality to uncover rime with the occult mythologies which are already so familiar to him. This match of myth to the actual is what Duncan calls the "truth and life of myth", the discovery or intensification of the real.

Like Passages 13, "Fire" and the later Passages 24, "Orders", this poem might be a particularly significant node or vortex, where the knotting or converging of different themes results in an access of energy. It is in relation to such critical points, such intersections, that other parts of the poem take up their places. For instance, Passages 14 and 15 could both be described as spring-cleaning or organising poems, the first a revision of appropriate Hermetic mythology to accommodate the "Cupid and Psyche" story which is of such continuing importance in Duncan's work:

What does it mean that the Tritonatores, "doorkeepers and guardians of the winds", carry the human Psyche to Night's invisible palace, ... to the Egg ...
where Eros sleeps,
the Protoegregorikos, the First Awakened? To [51]

while the second is a dusting-down of language itself, undertaken in preparation for the unknown:

He could not see to the end of the corridor.
What came beyond he did not know. [52]

This poem, Passages 15, "Spelling", does not do more than testify to an attitude to language, an attention which includes an attention to derivations and etymology which is shared on the one hand with Charles Olson and on the other with Heidegger. At the same time, there is an emphasis on pronunciation reminding us that though "rime" may be thematic or visual it is first and foremost aural. It is the ear which leads Duncan through so many of his Passages, his listening for reverberations and recurrences in the very sound of the words, sounds which he with his conviction that the world is totally meaningful, must believe will take him to a revelation of the truth.

It is this conviction that there is order in the universe and that language can be really meaningful that allows Duncan to adopt the tone of high seriousness and of political engagement which we find in Passages 24, "Orders". This title is as polysemous as the poem, suggesting order in the sense of pattern and also in the sense of command; "In the intensity of the work, It, Poetry, gives me Orders". [53] Always Duncan has conceived of himself as a poet under orders, in the sense of the soldier or the priest. He is not his own Master, but serves the Master of Rime, as he declares in Structure of Rime I:

> I ask the unyielding Sentence that shows Itself forth
> in the language as I make it,
> Speak! For I name myself your master, who
> come to serve.
> Writing is first a search in obedience. [54]

In Passages 24, this dedication to poetry is reaffirmed as though the poet were making his final viws:

> For the Good,
> il ben del intelletto, the good of the people,
> the soul's good.
> I put aside
> whatever I once served of the poet, master
> of enchanting words and magics,
> not to disown the old mysteries, sweet
> muthos our mouth's telling .

and I will still tell the beads, in the fearsome
street I see glimpses of I will pray again
to those great columns of moon's light,
"Mothering angels, hold my sight steady
and I will look this time as you bid me to see
the dirty papers, moneys, laws, orders
and corpses of people and people-shit". [55]

As in Passages 1, there is a choice of poetic role though this time between private lyricism and public verse, whether shaman or bard. But again, Duncan retains both possibilities when "I put aside" is countered by "not to disown" as he realises that his new position does not entail a rejection of the material which inspired his former poetry, but rather must include it in a more rigorous interpretation, a more thorough-going committment. Old delights are not discarded, but rather enter the poem in a new aspect, rime in a different way. The poem acknowledges the change of stance:

I thought to come into an open room
where in the south light of afternoon
one I was improvised
passages of changing dark and light
a music dream and passion would have playd
to illustrate concords or order in order,
a contrapuntal communion of all things.
but Schubert is gone
the genius of his melody
has passt, and all the lovely marrd sentiment
disownd I thought to come to, a poetry
having so much of beauty
that in whose progressions rage,
grief, dismay transported - but these
are themselves transports of beauty! The blood
streams from the bodies of his sons
to feed the voice of Gassire's lute. [56]

Duncan recognises here that the series and the book have taken a different course to that expected. His vision of alternating darkness and light, disorder accommodated by order, this domesticated version of flux where change was subsumed under diurnal variations and contained by the household, all this complacency, the pretension to a serene maturity, is shattered by the new and painful disorder which erupts in the poem.

Schubert's music, which represented this vision of "orders in order" is dismissed as "lovely marrd sentiment". But again, the very act of naming it in the poem includes it, though with a revised significance; it is a partial truth to be included in the larger truth of present reality. The passage is another example of hermeneutic interpretation. The poet has sought the detachment of art whereby human emotion would, in the poem, be transported into beauty. But as his arrogance is punctured and the anguish of the actual world impinges upon him, his "rage, grief and dismay" take over the poem and become themselves "transports of beauty", the beauty of righteous anger:

> The men who mean good
> must rage, grieve, turn with dismay
> to see how "base and unjust actions, when they are the objects of hope, are lovely to those that vehemently admire them" 57

There is a suggestion in the ambiguities of "transported" and "transports" that rage, grief, dismay and beauty are all transformations of energy, and that beauty itself does arise from the achievement of form, the right use of energy. Thus it seems we return to the notion of art translating anguish into beauty. But now the meanings of art and beauty have been deepened while the possibility of detachment has been abandoned. The poem seeks to be an authentic response to reality, for only through its authenticity can it present accurately possibilities for the future. There is no possibility of not responding to reality; response may be authentic or inauthentic, but no response is death. The life of the poem continues as it continues to respond, continues to stay open. The life of the poet continues as he responds with poetry; to be authentically a poet he must respond with poetry, with art. To abandon the poem might be an inauthentic response to his own nature as a man who is a poet; on the other hand, it might be an authentic response by a man who is not or who is no longer poet. And, at the other extreme, the final case it might be that the authentic poetic response to reality, the

authentic poem, would be silence. Such a response is the denial of the possibility of the future, whether it be for the particular poem, for poetry as an art form, or indeed for life itself.

Duncan brings in at this point the legend of Gassire's lute, the story of an African prince who acquires the art of the lute only through the death of all his sons and the loss of his kingdon, Wagadu. This tale is taken from Leo Frobenius's African Genesis and is also used by Pound in The Pisan Cantos. The implication seems to be that art can only come from suffering, or at least from an authentic response to the whole of experience. Art cannot survive in a vacuum, nor live off itself. It is real blood which must "feed the voice of Gassire's lute". But at least in Pound, there is a suggestion that Wagadu, an example of the legendary "polis", the ideal city, cannot be restored without the music of the lute, so that life too needs art:

> 4 times was the city rebuilded, Hooo Fasa
> Gassir, Hooo Fasa dell' Italia tradita
> now in the mind indestructible, Gassir, Hoooo Fasa,
> With the four giants at the four corners
> and four gates mid-wall Hooo Fasa
> and a terrace the colour of stars
> pale as the dawn cloud, la luna
> thin as Demeter's hari
> Hooo Fasa, and in a dance the renewal
> with two larks in contrappunto
> at sunset [58]

For, really, Wagadu, is not of stone, not of wood, not of earth. Wagadu is the strength which lives in the hearts of men and is sometimes visible because eyes see her and ears hear the clash of swords and ring of shields, and is sometimes invisible because the indomitability of men have overturned her, so that she sleeps. Sleep came to Wagadu the first time through vanity, for the second time through falsehood, for the third time through greed and for the fourth time through dissension. Should Wagadu ever be found for the fifth time, then she will live so forcefully in the minds of men that she will never be lost again, so forcefully that vanity, falsehood, greed and dissension will never be able to harm her.[59]

This legend provides the tribe with a lure or goal, a sense of their form or identity. Even in the story, the possibility of the city being rediscovered in actuality

seems remote. But for its maintenance even as maintained an ideal depends on the art of the tribal poet, and it was from a native tribal bard that Frobenius recorded the story.

The story of Wagadu and Gassire's lute rimes with many of the themes in Passages. The song of the lute, with its tales of battles and sufferings and its legend of the lost city which is to be found, is the identity of the tribe. At the same time, that song only continues as the tribe continues, as poets and singers arise with the knowledge to sing it. At remove, the work of Frobenius, Pound and now Duncan has ensured the song's continuance as part of a wider literature. Though its original function as part of a particular tribal culture may not survive, the song has been made available to the dominant Western culture and has made possible the enrichment of poems proceeding from that culture. Like the work of Eliot, Williams, H.D. and Pound, his "old masters"[60] the song of Gassire's lute "comes into the chrestomathy". And at the same time, the content of that song, the story of Wagadu, is of a city overthrown by internal dissensions, to be re-established and again destroyed, but to remain as a potential, an ideal, a continuing lure for the actual. As such it is emblematic of Passages, of Duncan's vision of poetry and of process as a whole.

The oscillation of Duncan's verse between opposite poles mirrors Whitehead's account of process as the oscillation between one and many:

> Opposed elements stand to each other in mutual requirement. In their unity, they inhibit or contrast. God and the World stand to each other in this opposed requirement, God is the infinite ground of all mentality, the unity of vision seeking physical multiplicity. The World is the multiplicity of finites, actualities seeking a perfected unity. Neither God, nor the World, reaches static completion. Both are in the grip of the ultimate metaphysical ground, the creative advance into novelty. Either of them, God and the World, is the instrument of novelty for the other. [61]

Duncan himself sees these forces of opposition as the battle between Eros and Thanatos, the dynamic tension described by Heraclitus in his image of the bending bow. In the following extract from his essay, Man's Fulfillment

in Order and Strife, Duncan attempts to explain this notion which is fundamental to Passages and his poetry as a whole:

> But the "we" who find ourselves on the brink of destruction of the World Order are also, wherever we have sought to imagine the nature of our freedom and of our commonality, the meaning of living for one's own true sake and of the multiplicities necessary for the fulfillment of the whole of Man's potentiality, we are also on the brink of our own vision of World Order. There is just this apprehension of a World Order, of a potential intellect, in which each lives. It is the attack everywhere upon the potential intellect of Man, the contempt for the vision of the world ecology and animal life and for Man's work and identity therein, that brings us to the brink. But this is an attack that is made in every generation of Man. The bend of the bow, Heraclitus called it. Freud in our day a Heraclitan saw the bow bent between Eros and Thanatos. In our apprehension of the potential intellect, we find superimposed the multiplicities of What Is ... "the facts of life" ... and ideas of World Order in which oppositions are at work in agony. There is a deadly intent at work in life. [62]

This brink on which we are poised is the present instant, in the poem the image at the centre of the vortex; the image which is no sooner achieved than it turns itself inside out to become its opposite. The truth lies neither in thesis nor antithesis, nor even in synthesis, but in the form of the dialectic, the reversal or the return. This is the basic theme of Duncan's Passages, manifest in the reflexive quality of his verse and in the favourite images of loom and shuttle, of the bow and of course the dance. As the pattern which can only be seen as it appears in the individual image or poem it corresponds to the secret "hid in its showing forth", the secret which is no secret at all but simply process.

In Passages 24, we see Duncan take on a new resolution as he takes his poetry into the public, or political arena. Yet his anxiety about the role, where the poet must take on the responsibility for the guidance and protection of his people, perhaps acquiring heroic or divine status, but sacrificing his private humanity, was reflected in Passages 19 where he quotes a story from Kipling's Rewards and Fairies, "The Knife and the Naked Chalk".

This is a Prometheus-type story of a stone-age flint user, son of a priestess, who, to save his people and flocks from the depredations of wolves leaves his pasture-lands and goes to the forest to obtain metal knives from a more advanced tribe. He wins the knives and saves his people but at the cost of an eye and his place in the tribe. His people fear him, exalt him to the status of a god, but another takes his bride and he is isolated from his mother who still tends him. Only because he had her promise of faithfullness did he hazard the adventure and take on the burden of responsibility, "She answered, 'Whether you live or die, or are made different, I am your Mother'".[63]

For Duncan too, it is only because he has this faith in the Mother, "Story, Herself a mother of sorts"[64] that he can continue. In these poems at least, in Bending the Bow, this assurance of the value of poetry and of his own vocation as a poet does not waver, but indeed in its dedication and self-transcendence must be considered religious in intensity. In the later Passages, we do feel that there has been some kind of sacrifice, that the poet, like the priest-king, has undergone maiming for the sake of the poem and therefore for the sake of the people. Perhaps this is a necessary suffering, a dying into life of the individual poem and poet as they are assumed into the larger reality:

> And from the dying body of America I see,
> or from my dying body,
> emerge
> children of a deed long before this deed [65]

In a sense, this necessary sacrifice of the past to the future is so obvious as to be trivial. Any projection which becomes actual entails change; every actual moment makes everything which precedes it unreal except as potential for "prehension" or selection into successive actualities. But Duncan here charges the metaphysical truism with political and prophetic force. The poem is the sum of the present and as such reflects the present evils through which process is working; it projects beyond these evils to the future, but a future which necessitates the end of

the present order. Yet the harder the poem strives towards this future, the smaller become the concerns of the individual poet.

However, the later Passages do not completely renounce the intimacies of the earlier poems. "Transgressing the Real", Passages 27, establishes a temporary respite, a recollection of earlier themes and previous apprehensions, reminding us of the language of the first poem:

> (under the cloak of his poem he retires
> invisible
> so that it seems no man but a world
> speaks
> for my thoughts are servants of the stars, and my words
> (all parentheses opening into
> come from a mouth that is the Universe la bouche d'ombre [66]

But the City has become the War, afternoon has become night and "la Bouche d'ombre" prevails over the hearth-stone and lamp-light. Passages 27, as its own images admit, is a short-lived and mistaken evasion, an attempt to transcend reality by retreating from the actual. Hence the invocation of powers and spirits, "fumes, lights, sounds, crystallisations" previously denounced, and the escape into idealism:

> For now in my mind all the young men of my time
> have withdrawn allegiance from this world, from
> public things [67]

This is a dream poem, a false prophecy in the sense that it is a projection which is incapable of realisation, a late attempt of the poet as individual to work, or influence, the universe through his art. He cannot dream "industries, businesses, universities, armies" to a halt.

This momentary recoil from necessity is overcome in the following poem, "The Light", Passages 28, when the poet acknowledges the inexorable force of process:

> that vision in which from the
> old law's terrible sentence
> wing'd the new law springs [68]

In Passages 29 and 30 positive transcendence is made possible through a confrontation of all the horror and

terror of the present, "the roaring din of American planes".[69] Private lives and pleasures are subsumed:

> And all times and intents of peaceful men
> Reduce to an interim, a passing play,
> between surpassing
> Crises of war. [70]

But from this horror, from the cosmic oppositions enacted with more or less awareness by human protagonists, process continues and "From the body of the poem, all that words create/presses forth to be".[71]

Passages 22-30 are contemporary with protest against American involvement in Vietnam. That war and the campaign against it were a challenge which Duncan's poetry rose to meet as he posed a denunciation of the actual America against his dream of a possible America, the America which could be polis, "the company of the living". His vision here is Whitmanesque and his strong feeling for Whitman allows him to interpret that poet liberally. Thus, Passages 26 is not merely ironic:

> "The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem?"
> Then America, the secret union of all states of Man,
> waits, hidden and challenging, in the hearts of the Viet Cong.
> "The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth"
> Whitman says - the libertarians of the spirit, the devotées of Man's commonality.[72]

Discussing the same passage from Whitman, in an article published only two years later Duncan wrote:

> Oracles are to be read many ways or both ways. And here, where "the greatest poem" underlies all, the "united states" appeared to me as the states of being or of Man united, all one's states of mind brought together in one governance; and "the Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth" means clearly that "America" and being "American" was a community that was from the beginning of Man and everywhere in the world. [73]

Again the poet is poised between the threat of disorder and the vision of order and union, in that moment between past and future which is potentially the moment of sunrise:

we live in the darkness in back of
her rising
sing
from the ridge-pole. [74]

Yet Duncan is very aware that they who lived in darkness may not live to enjoy the light. As part of the old order, he too may perish:

It is as if I were moving towards
the wastes of water all living things remember the
world to be,
the law of me
going under the wave. [75]

The force of Creativity inevitably submerges the individual in the wave of the continuing poem. But as it is discontinuous, real only in each successive and separate moment, it aims at Paradise which is at once the highest intensity of order and reality in the instant and at the same time the primordial and prospective union of God and Man, nature and culture. As we have seen, this is the potential which informs and lures Duncan's poetry and constitutes its process. We move in Passages from the theoretic ideal City, through theories of architecture and intimacies of the household outwards across previous stories and histories until we come to the horrifying actuality of the "swollen city", contemporary society in America. The poem explicates or unfolds itself in a process of self-interrogation which we may also describe as hermeneutic interpretation.

As the series proceeds we note that the imagery becomes increasingly dynamic, that we move from the notion of the poem as a solid, created structure to the poem as turbulent, self-creating organism. Eros as Love and Eros as War are dominant in this section of the poem in which the inevitability of strife must be reconciled with the unacceptability of Evil:

They've to take their souls in the war
as the followers of Orpheus take soul in
the poem
the wood to take fire from that dirty flame! [76]

Duncan's only solution is to understand Vietnam as the result of inauthentic vision, irresponsibility, the mistaken use of energy, force misdirected and blind:

> O you, who know nothing of the great theme of War,
> fighting because you have to, blindly, at no frontier
> of the Truth but in-
> structed by liars and masters of the Lie. [77]

The outrages of American policies in the 1960s proceeded, Duncan argues, from a fundamental flaw in the national psyche already recognised by Lawrence and prophesied by Blake:

> But the mania, the ravening eagle of America
> as Lawrence saw him "bird of men that are masters,
> lifting the rabbit-blood of the myriads up into ..."
> into something terrible, gone beyond bounds, or
> As Blake saw America in figures of fire and blood raging,
> ... in what image? the ominous roar in the air,
> the omnipotent wings, the all-American boy in the cockpit
> loosing his flow of napalm, below in the jungles
> "any life at all or sign of life" his target,
> drawing now
> not with crayons in his secret room
> the burning of homes and the torture of mothers and
> fathers and
> children,
> their hair aflame, screaming in agony, but
> in the line of duty, for the might and enduring fame
> of Johnson, for the victory of American will
> over its victims,
> releasing his store of destruction over the enemy,
> in terror and hatred of all communal things, of communion,
> of communism. [78]

In his own exegesis of this poem in Man's Fulfillment in Order and Strife, Duncan explains his notion that America's distinctiveness comes from a failure to recognise its own tendencies, the force of its own desire. On this Freudian interpretation, America destroys because the desire for full communion is feared and denied. America's disorder is not therefore creative, but wasteful of energy, a failure in care; the nation as a whole is afraid of the future, afraid of the new order which will overwhelm its identity. Duncan follows his quotations from Blake and Lawrence with a reference to "The Firebombing" by the contemporary poet, James Dickey, a writer by whom he was at first impressed

but now esteems less highly. His condemnation of Dickey represents his condemnation of this aspect of America:

> From a poem by my own near-contemporary, James Dickey, I brought forward into my own composition the figure of the bomber - "the All-American boy in the cockpit loosing his flow of napalm"-he appears in Up Rising. Freud has prepared our minds to see how the unfulfilled and repressed desire flares up in fear and rages in burning and killing. Blake and Lawrence, as I have shown, saw America charged with such force, exploding into scenes of fire and bloodshed. In Dickey's poem "Firebombing", dwelling upon his own phantasies, fed by his actual missions over Japan in the Second World War, the poet projects an exultant and fearful inner reality in which his somnambulistic experience of power remembered in his bombing flights mingles with a hostility towards his own American neighbourhood and even his home ...
>
> It is his own world, America, that now is burning in his thought of that world. And like Lawrence, Dickey is not only exultant in his hostile craving for destructive power but also apprehensive in that power; in his case he is not scornful of his scorn (Lawrence sees the Eagle in his arrogance) but fearful of his fearfulness (Dickey sees the Eagle in his murderous will) [79]

For Duncan, the alternative to this world order is not the United Nations ... "a bargaining table of rival predators and their prey", [80] but the vision of a larger order, of communion, the vision not of the treaty table, but of the love-feast:

> It is not in political right thinking or political power that we come into the apprehension of a World Order but in falling in love. It is in the very act of love, in the marital union, and then in the love-banquet of brotherhood ... at once ideal and sexual that the meaning of freedom and fulfillment is at work. [81]

But what is to follow this love feast? It must be the end of the world. Certainly it is the end of the world as we know it, the end of us as we know ourselves, and this, surely, is what we fear, unprepared to admit that though we reject our death, individually and as our species, mortality and evolution dictate that we will nevertheless die. So in the last Passage to appear in Bending the Bow Duncan comes to a fuller acknowledgement of the nature of strife, of the eternal opposites, the successive struggles of death and birth symbolised for him in the emergence of

Pegasus and Chrysaor from the headless neck of Medusa:

> the twain rise to form for this moment
> the head of a new monster
> Genius [82]

Process is always ambivalent, the moment is always pregnant with love and death. Pegasus, "that great horse, Poetry", must always be accompanied by Chrysaor, father of Geryon who was the herdsman of the underworld:

> And from the dying body of America I see,
> or from my dying body,
> emerge
> children of a deed long before this deed,
> seed of Poseidon, depth in which the blue above
> is reflected
> released
> huge Chrysaor and Pegasus sword and flash
> Father of Geryon, of him
> who carries Dante and Virgil into Hell's depths,
> and steed of Bellerophon
> beneath whose hooves once again
> new springs are loosed on Helicon. [83]

Duncan states in The Truth and Life of Myth, "In the World of myth, Eros and Thanatos rule in the Creative Will". We may see the myth of Passages as being this struggle between Eros and Thanatos, a struggle where Eros at first dominates, but where in the closing sequence Thanatos becomes increasingly important. In the climactic group of poems, Passages 22-30 (this includes 22-27 which were published separately as Of the War) the balance is held and maximum intensity achieved. Disorder is contained by order. The early and mid-sixties seem to have been a most fruitful period for Duncan. There was the poetic communion, the polis of poetry which included Creeley, Olson and others, a "company of the living" whose importance Duncan has attested:

> It had been awfully important to me to feel that Denise Levertov and Robert Creeley and Charles Olson and myself were a kind of movement and that they took care of a lot of areas that I even by temperament wouldn't be able to cover. [84]

At the same time, this community was located in the War and in the opposition to America's involvement in Vietnam. As the war ended and the community broke up, as poets aged, dispersed, died (Spicer in 1965, Olson in 1970), the impetus for Passages seems to have slackened, and Thanatos to have become increasingly important in Duncan's work.

Not only has the tone of his poetry become increasingly sombre but also his output has decreased. His last published book is the pamphlet Tribunals: Passages 31-35 (1971) while Passages 36 appears embedded in "A Seventeenth Century Suite" (Maps 6; East Garfield, Pennsylvania, 1971). These poems have a valedictory note and though there is no overt suggestion of finality we feel that the poet is bringing his individual work to a close in preparation for his own death. There is revision of the wide range of sources used in previous poems, the suggestion of Judgement, the movement away from this world which is at once a revulsion from contemporary society and at the same time renunciation of personal identity and mortality.

In the first poem Duncan returns to the theosophical doctrines of his childhood, the notion of spirit dispersed and lost in matters

> Out of the sun and the dispersing stars
> go forth the elemental sparks,
> outpouring vitalities,
> stir in the Sallitter of the earth
> a living Spirit. [85]

Each spark of spirit has a double identity, the possibility of authentic or inauthentic existence:

> the spirit can
> and may raise or drawn itself
> in its own qualities, or take its life
> in the influence of the stars, as it pleaseth. [86]

The contrast of spirit and matter is of course dualistic and implies a Gnostic turning from the world towards the other world, an impression reinforced in Passages 32:

> Your name, Jesus, has begun in my heart
> again an allegiance to that Kingdom
> "not of this world" but in the beginning of things
> fallen apart [87]

This dualism is counterbalanced by Duncan's unitive organic philosophy where all phenomena, all individuals obey the same law of process, so that each individual word, each individual cell, each individual spark images and implies the entire cosmos. In Passages 31 he identifies or rimes "Word" with "spark", each being a "severed distinct thing", as man himself is an "isolated satyr". Yet it is as man follows or recognises the organic law at work in the words that the himself is led back upwards to the stars:

> He bends his head
> to hear the sound he makes
> that leads his heart upward,
>
> ascending to where the best breaks
> into an all-but-unbearable whirling crown
> of feet dancing [88]

This notion of the word as cellular individual is reinforced by Duncan's reading of Sir Charles Sherrington's Man on His Nature, which he cites as his source in the following discussion:

> The cell is not a polyphasic chemico-physical system merely. Many a magic drop of complex jelly could be that. (So too, the phone in itself as a mere noise has no "self"; it is, as with the life-cell of the body, because it carries the Ka or DNA, the information of the sound of the poem that the imagination addresses that it comes as sounding. The phone of the poem has tonal meaning or individuality that leads towards the whole that it belongs to. We can hear the rightness of the rime and follow it faithfully, even when the society it means never comes to more than fragmentary realisation. The sound intends). The cell is a polyphasic chemico-physical system which is integratively organised. Hence there comes about that itcan answer to what is described as "life". [89]

In the struggle to relate the individual to the whole, Duncan is attempting to come to terms with his own mortality, presaged by high blood-pressure, a condition already influencing his poetry in "The Soldiers" and "Up Rising":

> the blood's natural
> uprising against tryanny [90]

and acknowledged in Passages 30, "from my dying body". In Passages 31, paying tribute to Olson both his peer and

master who was dying or had already died, he quotes from Projective Verse:

> Eternity
>
> already gone up into "MUST MUST MUST
> the Poet, his heart urgent,
>
> leaping beyond him, writes: "MOVE
>
> INSTANTER ON ANOTHER!" [91]

From here, he moves on to a prophecy and apparent acceptance of his own death, viewed as a death into life:

> I saw
>
> willingly the strain of my heart break
> and pour its blood thundering at the life-locks
>
> to release full my man's share of the stars'
>
> majesty thwarted. [92]

However, the placing of the last two words somehow subverts the entire poem by returning to the notion of individual power and earthy ambition.

These latest poems are rancorous, confused and confusing. The rage against American society remains but the crusading optimism has gone. Passages 34, "The Feast" is almost a parody of the true love-feast in which the nations were to be united. Instead we have a private dinner-party where the details of the cooking become repulsive in the context of napalm-burned flesh which has filled the previous poem:

> the guests
>
> gather round
> pleasures of the household, the fine
> burnt smell of the meat pleasing
> to the nostrils yet
> this house is not Jahweh's [93]

We are reminded both that we may not, in honesty, retreat from the world into the household, and also of the true, fearful nature of the communion supper. Eros as Lover is also Eros as Hunger and life continues by feeding on life.

Duncan is struggling in this poem with this concept of the process and of Paradise as present only in the here and now of the moment against the continuing attraction of

the "shining world", of the transcendental world of light proposed by the Gnostics. Similarly, he seems unable to reconcile his vision of the present reality giving way to a greater reality with the fact that future reality, the truth which is to come, cannot be known to him even though his poetry may form a part of it. He castigates America for its failure to reach its potential:

> I am speaking now of the dream in which America sleeps,
> the New World,
> moaning, floundering, in three hundred years of
> invasions - ... [94]

Yet this Blakean rhetoric cannot prevent us from realising that this dream in which America is immersed like the Gnostic Adam before the arrival of the Messenger is only another aspect of the more usual American optimism, the American dream which was Whitman's and had been Duncan's:

> The Jews use the name Israel,
> you use the name America or the name Man as if for a
> chosen tribe
> or nation or for one animal species the Grand Design
> labord,
>
> or for the orders of Life,
>
> but the Golden Ones meet in the Solar Councils
> and their alphabet is hidden in the evolution of
> chemical codes. [95]

The Golden Ones are gorgeous but unconvincing and the discoveries of science about the functioning of the chemical codes have to some extent turned against Duncan. Perhaps, in these lines covertly, for he cannot acknowledge it overtly, he recognises the possibility of randomness and chance at play in the universe:

> I don't believe there is any chance at all ... I mean, we have got testimony about chance, don't we? But personally I find myself deficient in my sense of chance.[96]

Admittedly in this same passage he does argue that chance operations reveal "a higher not a lesser order", but the assertion is not worked out with conviction in the poem. In a sense, therefore, Duncan seems to have turned his back on possibility, to have behaved inauthentically. Looked at from another aspect, it may appear that his individual

poetic energy and capacity for order is failing, that the structure of his poetry is becoming looser, less intense, that entrophy is at work. So that the plea that the human mind must shake loose may at one level be a demand for creative disruption but at the same time may reflect a loss of energy, a deterioration into formlessness and disorder.

In Passages 36, embedded in the very fine Seventeenth Century Suite, the poet seems to have collected himself, although at the same time he is returning to an earlier mode of derivations from the masters which offers him some external structural support. But even here the very strength of the poem lies in its despair:

> Eat, eat this bread and be thankful
> it does not yet run with blood [97]

in its humility and recognition of limit:

> For a moment,
> ephemeral, we keep,
> alive in the deepening shame of Man,
> this room where we are, this house,
> this garden, this home
> our art would make
> in what is threatened from within. [98]

The bard's robes seem to have been laid aside as the poet returns to the domestic hearth. But this is not a poem of reconciliation or solution; rancour, injuries, discontents are still fresh, still painful. Yet if this embittered retrospective is into the final Passage it is difficult to conceive of a sequel:

> It was about the end of an old friendship,
> the admission of neglect rancoring,
> mine of her, hers of what I am,
> And festering flesh was there.
> It was very like that coming to know
> my mother was at war with what I was to be,
> and in the Courts of Love I raged that year
> in every plea declared arrogant
> and in contempt of Love.
>
> I do not as the years go by grow tolerant
> of what I cannot share and what
> refuses me. There's that in me as fiercely beyond

the remorse that eats me in its drive
as Evolution is in
working out the courses of what will last.
In Truth 'tis done. At last. I'll not
repair. [99]

But Duncan, of course, has himself provided the answer:

Because when he (Williams) finished Book IV, he had this marvellous example of a Coda. Williams realised that after his conclusion he had another book. [100]

Seventeenth Century Suite ends with a coda, which though not a "Passage" recapitulates many of the series' concerns and images:

and into Night I go; I say
the Night was hidden in the life of me I cannot say
was hidden thru and thru.
Campfire by campfire burns thru the veil.
... ...
And to the shores
sleep knows upon a further deep
solemnity
into the infancy of a darkening bliss
Love sets me free. [101]

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN.

1 "Tribal Memories", Passages 1, Bending the Bow, (London, 1971) p.9.

2 Interview with Ekbert Faas in Ekbert Faas, Towards a New American Poetics (Santa Barbara, 1978) p.82.

3 "Changing Perspectives in Reading Whitman" in The Artistic Legacy of Walt Whitman edited by E.H. Miller (New York, 1970) p.80.

4 "At the Loom", Passages 2, Bending the Bow, p.12.

5 "On the Structure of a Poetic Temperament" in 10 19 (October, 1974) p.31.

6 Bending the Bow, p.74.

7 Bending the Bow, Introduction, p.v.

8 See previous chapter, p.12.

9 Robert Duncan, The Truth and Life of Myth (Fremont, Michigan, 1975) p.64.

10 Roland Barthes, S/Z translated by Richard Miller (London, 1975) pp.5-6.

11 This first started to appear in The Opening of the Field (1969). In Bending the Bow "Structure of Rime XXVI for Kenneth Anger" is also "Passages 20 AN ILLUSTRATION "

12 See Faas, p.63.

13 The Truth and Life of Myth, p.8.

14 The Truth and Life of Myth, p.62.

15 The Truth and Life of Myth, p.11.

16 "At the Loom", Passages 2, Bending the Bow, p.11.

17 Charles Olson, The Special View of History (Berkeley, 1970) p.20.

18 See Being and Time, p.56.

19 The Truth and Life of Myth, p.8.

20 Robert Duncan, "Towards and Open Universe" in Poetics of the New American Poetry (New York, 1973) p.214.

21 Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion (Boston: enlarged edition, 1963) p.248.

22 Jonas, p.249.

23 See Jonas, p.174.

24 Robert Duncan, The Sweetness and Greatness of Dante's Divine Comedy, Lecture at the Dominican College of San Rafael, 1965 (San Francisco, 1968).

25 Roy Harvey Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry (Princeton, 1961) p.32.

26 The Truth and Life of Myth, p.41.

27 Bending the Bow, p.10.

28 Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence (New York, 1973) p.60.

29 Bending the Bow, p.9.

30 Bending the Bow, p.10.

31 Bending the Bow, p.10.

32 Bending the Bow, p.11.

33 Bending the Bow, p.27.

34 Bending the Bow, p.29.

35 Bending the Bow, p.18.

36 Bending the Bow, p.29.

37 William Blake, "Infant Sorrow", Complete Writings of William Blake edited by Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford, 1969) p.217.

38 Bending the Bow, p.29.

39 Bending the Bow, p.30.

40 Bending the Bow, p.29.

41 Bending the Bow, p.32.

42 Bending the Bow, p.33.

43 Bending the Bow, p.40.

44 Bending the Bow, p.44.

45 Bending the Bow, p.42.

46 Bending the Bow, p.43.

47 Bending the Bow, p.45.

48 Bending the Bow, p.44.

49 Bending the Bow, p.63.

50 Bending the Bow, p.64.

51 Bending the Bow, p.46.

52 Bending the Bow, p.48.

53 Man's Fulfillment in Order and Strife, Caterpillar 8-9 (1970) p.238.

54 The Structure of Rime 1" in The Opening of the Field (London, 1969) p.12.

55 Bending the Bow, p.77.

56 Bending the Bow, p.78.

57 Bending the Bow, p.79.

58 Ezra Pound, "Canto 74" The Cantos (London, 1964) p.457. See also Hugh Kenner in The Pound Era (London, 1972) pp.506-509.

59 Leo Frobenius, African Genesis (London, 1938) pp.109-110.

60 Bending the Bow, p.78.

61 A.N. Whitehead, Process and Reality, p.411.

62 Man's Fulfillment in Order and Strife, p.249.

63 Bending the Bow, p.67.

64 Bending the Bow, p.67.

65 Bending the Bow, p.123.

66 Bending the Bow, p.120.

67 Bending the Bow, p.120.

68 Bending the Bow, p.123.

69 Bending the Bow, p.126.

70 Bending the Bow, p.128.

71 Bending the Bow, p.128.

72 Bending the Bow, p.113.

73 "Changing Perspectives in Reading Whitman", p.80.

74 Bending the Bow, p.76.

75 Bending the Bow, p.74.

76 Bending the Bow, p.112.

77 Bending the Bow, p.114.

78 Bending the Bow, p.81.

79 "Man's Fulfillment in Order and Strife" p.246.

80 "Man's Fulfillment in Order and Strife" p.246.

81 "Man's Fulfillment in Order and Strife" p.244.

82 Bending the Bow, p.129.

83 Bending the Bow, p.132.

84 Faas, p.60.

85 Robert Duncan, Tribunals (1970) p.1.

86 Tribunals, p.1.

87 Tribunals, p.5.

88 Tribunals, p.2.

89 "Notes on the Structure of Rime", Maps 6, p.47.

90 Bending the Bow, p.114. See also "Man's Fulfillment in Order and Strife" p.243, where Duncan discusses the effect of this physiological disturbance.

91 Tribunals, p.2.

92 Tribunals, p.3.

93 Tribunals, p.14.

94 Tribunals, p.20.

95 Tribunals, p.23.

96 Faas, pp.79-80.

97 Maps 6, p.28.

98 Maps 6, p.30.

99 Maps 6, p.30.

100 Faas, p.77.

101 Maps 6, pp.38-41.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EDWARD DORN AND GUNSLINGER

Gunslinger is an intriguing and in many ways baffling poem. It is off-beat, casual, jokey, yet Robert Duncan has acclaimed it as

> One of the poems of the era, of the one we are going into, or the era Gunslinger begins to create for us.[1]

The poem resists interpretation, indeed it seems wilfully difficult. When the poet makes so few concessions to his readers it is open to them to adopt their own reading strategy. It is legitimate for the informed reader or critic to measure the poem against his own expectations of what a poem in this category should do or be. It must be stressed, however, that the reader cannot afford to be dogmatic about categorial definitions and that he should be willing to modify his expectations in the light of his reading, a reading which in any case he must not regard as definitive.

In this study we have developed certain expectations of the contemporary long poem, of the poem with epic pretensions and founded on a metaphysics of process. We must summarize these expectations briefly before embarking on the attempt at an interpretation of Gunslinger.

We have discovered that the long poem of today will be based on one or other of the philosophies of process, and consequently that its founding myth or structural metaphor will be the oscillation between the One and the Many, a process which is the generating dynamic of the poem. The One and the Many are at once opposite and equal, and from this primary polarization subsidiary opposites follow. The Many includes the world, history, separate events, individual consciousnesses, disconnectedness; the One includes Mind, the collective consciousness, myth, ritual and celebration. In the poem, mind

seeks to integrate itself by encompassing the multiplicity of the world, by converting the separated events of history into the permanence of myth. This operation is carried out in language through the unifications of metaphor.

We have discovered also that the poem based on process philosophy is not autonomous and cannot be finished except in the most arbitrary ways, for example, by the bottom of the page, end of the book, authorial whim, or even the author's death. The only wholeness the poem can have is symbolized by Charles Olson's Ouroboros or MacDiarmid's circumjack Cencrastus, "the curly snake" which, forever swallowing its tail, represents eternal process. As the poem is never complete, so it is never detached. Though it operates in its own sphere according to the rules and expectations of poetry and literature, it is interdependent with the world of mind and the physical world. In an age which has concentrated on the study of meaning, which has invented semiology and revolutionized linguistics, poetry, in some sense parent of all these activities, has become increasingly self-conscious. Poetry is seen as one form of linguistic activity, one way in which mind finds and transmits material from the external world. For some poets and some philosophers poetry may be the epitome of linguistic activity; they would argue that poetry's justification lay in its capacity to structure the external world significantly, to innovate in language and thus extend possibilities for communication and action. So poetry, like other forms of language, may be a form of life, but "there are many forms of life"[2] and poetry's glory lies not in its detachment from other forms but in its involvement with them. The view that poetry's idiosyncracy is found not in its separateness from life and process but in its character as linguistic process results in a concentration on language within the poem itself. Worked become self-regarding, convoluted; words create meaning instead of meaning being put into words.

As well as the themes of process and of language, any contemporary long poem with epic or political pretensions will perforce concern itself with matters of myth and history. It will draw on myth and history for its own substance, it will convert history into myth through metaphorical discoveries of identity and repetition, it will emerge as history in its own right, an event occurring in the wider world. At the same time, within its own limits according to its own rules the poem will establish its own history and myth.

Let us therefore consider the "matter" of Gunslinger; how the semi-autonomous world of the work is constructed from the facts and fictions of the wider universe. Much more than any other poem we have studied, Gunslinger is a fiction, a story, a world with its own characters and rules. But these characters are derived in one way or another from the "real" world. The geography of the poem is "real", the action is placed in the American South-West. Imaginary characters perform a "real" journey travelling through "real" towns - Mesilla, Truth or Consequences, Madrid, Cerillos, Santa Fe. But the real and the imaginary are lifted to another plane where one is no less credible than the other, the Rio Grande no more real than the Talking Horse. In the other poems which have been examined, historical and mythical content enter with little distortion or mediation; in Gunslinger they are transformed. This may in part result from the suppression of the "I" since it removes the temptation of the poet to regard the poem as the representation of his own mind and to transfer his own mental furnishings into the poem, unaltered. However, though the world of Gunslinger does separate itself from the world of its author, it cannot be read in isolation from politics and literature. Dorn requires from his reader a fairly high level of general education since the poem exploits and at one level satirizes contemporary culture: structuralism, existentialist philosophy,

computer technology and so on. The real names which appear in the poem, such as Heidegger and Levi-Strauss, demand a sophisticated response, an ability to recognize them as "names", code-words bandied about in certain circles. Even as names, apart from the content of their writings, they are words to conjure with:

> I want these characters to have the possibility of such names because they are widely understood and evokable intellectual signs. After all, this poem is addressed to the community in which I move which is educated. My own audience might be small but it is potentially comprehensive because the intellectual community is a mass community as much as the cotton picker's community, or the trucker's.[3]

We notice here that Dorn is addressing himself to a community, so fulfilling one of the conditions for an epic or public poem. This confidence that there is a community from which and to which he speaks is essential. Robert Duncan, to an extent, shares the same audience as Dorn, although in his case he addresses himself to the idea of an audience, a to-be-redeemed American society harangued by prophet-poets from Whitman to Olson. Dorn, in contrast, abdicates the prophetic role as he abdicates the "I" which inside the poem is resigned to Slinger and Poet. The romantic subjectivity which threatens to overwhelm the poems of Duncan and, differently, MacDiarmid, is thus avoided so that Dorn is able to write what Donald Davie has recognized as true comedy.

> What will get least attention in Dorn's <u>Gunslinger</u> is just what first strikes and beguiles any half-way competent reader ... the fact that it is a joking poem, high-spirited and good-tempered, carried forward on a steadily inventive play of puns and pleasantries. For centuries now English speakers have not known what to do with comedy, in verse or out of it. We have been quite at a loss before the classical conviction that comedy is one of the great canonical modes in which the imagination asserts itself; that the comic vision is an inclusive, as vigorous, ultimately as grave, as the tragic vision which it complements.[4]

We may see how real names and events are metamorphosed if we consider the role that Hughes plays, or does not play, on the poem. We discover that on one level Hughes is no mere than a code name for the object of the quest, but that since the true object of the quest is the quest itself, Hughes is unimportant:

> He was invoked as the object of the search in a hypothetical way, not in any real way, because nobody's looking for him really.[5]

"Hughes" in the poem does not denote a single, eccentric millionaire, but is rather a sign for all the connotations which have accreted around the name. It is this name and its connotations, its mythical qualities, which are juggled in the poem, a lesson which Slinger tries to teach "I" early in the proceedings:

> It is that
> cruelly absolute sign my father
> I am the son of the sun, we two
> are always in search
> of the third - who is that I asked
> Hughes?
> Howard?
> Yes.
> No.
> Why not?
> Because the third can never be
> a texan [6]

As readers, we are being deliberately bemused by the conventions for printing dialogue. In this interchange it is the crosstalk that matters, not who is saying what, since ultimately the characters are all one. But the message is there: Slinger, taking on in this passage heroic stature derived from Trinitarian myth and Navaho legend, by asserting that Hughes is the name of the quest and therefore as general as the Logos or the Holy Ghost, as the Absolute itself, shows that he cannot be a particular named texan, Howard Hughes. When we proceed to The Cycle, the notions surrounding that "individual Texan" are attached to Robart (the real Howard Hughes's middle name) or Rupert (Rupert Bear?). The distortion of the name Howard Robard Hughes and the

surrealistic exaggeration of the gossip surrounding the millionaire remind us again that this is a poetic discourse, not journalism. Hughes actually was rumoured by the press to wear Kleenex boxes on his feet but his reputation for eating burgers is heightened in the poem till he himself becomes the Big Cheese:

5 For He was decoyed as the cheeze in a burger
Upon a long white stretcher ferried by two poodles
While he shuffled along with his feet encased
In kleenex boxes He wobbled astride an industrial broom[7]

In fact, as the technique becomes more surrealistic the political attack on the matter rather than the person of Hughes becomes more direct. The choice of Hughes as a name is not random, for Dorn has declared himself fascinated by the mixture of money and power represented in the robber barons, perhaps the real founding fathers of present-day America:

I saw an energy there that I thought was extremely interesting... They were like dinosaurs in a strange way. More interesting really than the larger combines that more efficiently make capital coalesce. It's another aspect of that individualism syndrome that we still, in fact, creep beneath completely in this country ... I think it's completely interesting. It's drama. It's drama about the most crucial thing we know, money.[8]

Dorn has exploited the facts and the already mythologocal stories as material for his poem. Inside the poem they take on their own life; Hughes and Robart have their own history and establish their own myth. But their action inside the poem, the poem itself are an accretion to the Hughes myth and a comment on our society.

Gunslinger insists on itself as a poem, not only a poem, but a poem in print, a book. Its world is a world of literature, its ancestors other poems. Gunslinger is given to punctuating his conversation with first lines from Shakespeare's sonnets.

How like a winter hath my absence been
observed the Slinger to himself [9]

Metaphor is drawn from printing convention:

> the barrel justified
> with a line pointing
> to the neighborhood of infinity.[10]
> (a neighborhood delimited by the full stop)
>
> on her ankle a band
> a slender ampersand [11]

The Literate Projector which converts films back into scripts also asserts the booklines of the book, and when the Cycle is eventually delivered it comes from the Poet who must himself be the Literate Projector. Thus the Poet retrieves the role of story-teller, myth-keeper from films and television.

As a printed poem, Gunslinger is able to exploit typographical devices such as the Proclamation (p.80), the Night Letter from I, Secretary to Parmendies, and even the illuminated letter at the beginning of the prologue to Book IIII. The typography confers a significance the spoken world alone could not convey; "Goddesse" with an illuminated G informs us that we are in an artificial poetic world, that although the geography of the poem is in the raw South-West, it is at the same time firmly located in the tradition of the Greeks, the Elizabethans and all our later literature. So unlike a great deal of writing, particularly since the insistence on naturalism and realism, the poem does not attempt to copy reality or replicate nature:

> The replification(sic) of the world is possibly no longer interesting. But, does it still generate itself, and in Pieces is: the world breath is a motion of real establishment. And the confrontations, within the organism of their emotional time, are the exactitude of the world insofar as it can be accurate.[12]

The attempt is not to conform with the world of appearances, but to discover the well-rounded heart of reality, to be authentic to the Inner "One" behind all appearances:

> There is but one Logos
> Tho many images audition [13]

Liberated from the obligation to copy the real world, the poem enlarges its boundaries, pretends to the dominant reality. There is a sense in which Duncan, in earnest, and Dorn, not entirely in jest, attempt themselves to get into the world of words, to make their fictions "real". As a conceit this is poetry; believed, it is magic, an attempt to recover a prelapsarian state where word and world, idea and reality, man and God are one. The exaltation of the world of the poem has its dangers, for the poet, all-powerful in his imagination, may become too complacent about the intractibility of the everyday world he shares with the rest of us and consequently forfeit our confidence in his vision.

Dorn's affectation of inhabiting the poem and of placing its events on a level with those of his life so that they are interconnected has its irritating consequences. The average reader is deprived of certain material he needs to understand the poem. Public references are more acceptable. If all works of literature indeed formed a vast realm in which particular poems were unfenced regions and if we were all able to live as unconfined inhabitants of the realm instead of as restricted individuals in the physical world then we would have no difficulty in making connections, picking up references, making inferences from other sources. With a great deal of effort we can uncover references to publicly available works, and this sort of effort has been made with, for instance, the poetry of Pound, Eliot and Olson. But there is a quantity of private information and reference accessible only to Dorn's immediate audience, his peers on both sides of the Atlantic with whom he shared his life, his work and even his writing while Gunslinger was in progress. For example, the interviews in Contemporary Literature and Vort show that parts of Gunslinger relate very closely to Bean News, a once-off ephemeral newspaper written in conjunction with Jeremy Prynne and others:

The lead story in Bean News is "Sllab Outline Arrives". This is all like Book III stuff, the deity of which Bean is the messenger. And Bean is the editor of Bean News. So suddenly what's the newspaper our group reads as they're travelling...Bean News. In that sense I'm interested in the experimental aspect of a newspaper rising vertically off the pages of the poem in a three-dimensional sense. So this has "Sllab Outline Arrives, In a cloud of adobe dust and chicken feathers...out of state eye-witness account". BNS, Bean News Service, Beenville, Colorado. I is in the meantime off at Notsuoh, which is Houston spelled backward, at the conference on mega-space and reporting what's happening there. And the editorial quotes a signal which arrived too late to print, which by the at time deals with the arrival of Sllab in Beenville because all those vectors have been bicked up. I mean that is what it means to me. Anybody else can read it as a newspaper. In the list on the editorial page it shows who has contributed in one way or another.[14]

But anyone cannot read this ephemeral publication, most copies of which are lost. Yet from Dorn's interview it would appear that certain sections of Book III could be very much illumined by reference to the paper.

> There is but one Sllab ahead
> (don't look back
> and Bean is his messenger [15]

In the final version of the poem it is only here and in a passage in Book IIII that we find any reference to Sllab. It is like reading a serial with some of the parts missing; we are prevented from understanding the full significance of Sllab.

> You mean that giant bronze bean
> That's Sllab's messenger [16]

A colossal monument which arrives as mysteriously as the monolith in Kubrick's 2001, it is, despite appearances, made out of rubber and, like a jukebox, is coin-operated to broadcast its message:

> The Fenomena is stark, energetic
> full-of-shit & well defined -
> altho there is much that I find sickening -
> the excessive opulence & waste,
> the blatant commercialization
> on which the society is built,

> the selfish introspective approach
> to world affairs, the hysterical
> obsession with disease,
> the puerile abhorrence of old age
> & death - all these illnesses
> are the manifestation of overdeveloped rites [17]

In the poem we are not fairly provided with information about Sllab; preceding passages suggest that he is one manifestation of Hughes - "Hecho on Texas/para El Hughes Tool Co", but that it is Hughes as Deus Absconditus:

> I meant to say Sllab
> did a fantastik job
> and furthermore, left it
> right in the middle of the field
> at half-time, remember,
> then he took a plane to the Garage
> and Drove the rest of the way [18]

As a God-figure, his role in creating a society is equivalent to that of the poet, while the message given him seems to coincide with Dorn's own views. Yet we are not adequately informed why there should be this resolution with the Other, the Adversary and though we may deduce it, we may not be persuaded. This is a recurring problem in Books III and IIII where the poem takes off in a number of different directions which do not proceed from Books I and II, but from other activities in the poet's life which most readers cannot know about.

Similar difficulties are caused by the use of private vocabularies, drug slang and so forth, in the poem. Again, it is partly due to the poet's sense of an inner circle to which he is speaking with such confidence that he can afford to ignore the incomprehension of the mass; but there is also a deliberate pursuit of obscurity, a sort of neo-hermeticism which is cultivated for its own sake. Perhaps this creation of secrets increases the poet's sense of power over language, his feeling that he can withold as well as communicate information, that certain truths will only be granted to those who win them. The poem thus imposes a quest on the reader, a quest which not all (the lazy, the non-hip, the uneducated, the uninitiated) are equipped to fill. Some

may feel, as I do, that thelanguage of the poem is exclusive to the point of arrogance and that this diminishes its value.

On the other hand, the references to Parmendides, Heidegger, Levi-Strauss etc. may make the poem more difficult but seem entirely legitimate because they direct us to work in the public domain. Dorn himself has more than once denied that a detailed knowledge of the works of any of them is essential for the reading of Gunslinger:

> You see, I don't want the poem to be susceptible or dependent on textural considerations which are external to itself. Like it's not an academic poem. I mean you might know what I or anyone knows about Heidegger, or how much they've read. I hope that's not detectable.[19]

However, understanding of the poem is enhanced if one has some familiarity with the ideas of these writers since they do provide the set and stage furnishings for the poem on the intellectual level. For instance, it helps to know that Parmenides' extant work is cast in the form of a dream poem where the philosopher is carried off in a horse-drawn chariot. The departure of the stagecoach at the end of the first book of Gunslinger is strongly reminiscent of Parmenides' Proem:

> The steeds that carry me took me as far as my heart could desire, when once they had brought me and set me on the renowned way of the goddess, who leads the man who knows through every town. On the way I was conveyed; for on it did the wise steeds convey me, drawing my chariot, and maidens led the way. And the axle blazing in the socket - for it was urged round by well-turned wheels at each end - was making the wheels in the nave sing, while the daughters of the Sun, hastening to convey me into the light, threw back the veils from off their faces and left the abode of night.[20]

As important as these surface echoes is the reinforcement of the quest theme. Gunslinger and I enter upon a quest, code-named "Hughes". We may suspect that their goal is essentially that of Parmenides "the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth". The notion of the quest is one representation or metaphor of the lure of creativity, the attempt to articulate and order the Many into

the One, while the pursuit or journey is the process, the reality of the poem:

> What makes Process and Reality heavy
> is the & [21]

The naming of Parmenides may be regarded as further indication that the poem is founded on process philosophies and projective poetics for Parmenides, like Heraclitus, Anaximander and other pre-Socratics, is regarded by the process philosophers as an early master. We have seen that contemporary process or projective poetics derive very largely from an amalgam of Heidegger's thought and Whitehead's Process and Reality, particularly as mediated by Charles Olson. For Heidegger especially, Parmenides was an important figure. Opinions as to what Parmenides actually taught vary but he seems to have regarded Being or Reality as the unknowable plenum, while the multifarious world of appearances and change is illusory and unreal:

> Wherefore all these are more names which mortals laid down believing them to be true - coming into being and perishing, being and not being, change of place and variation of bright colour.[22]

> Dear lengthening Day
> I have loved your apparencies since you created me [23]

At least according to Heidegger, these early Greeks were:

> 'perpetually compelled to wrest Being from appearance and preserve it against appearance...in the ceaseless struggle between Being and Seeming they wrested Being from the essent, bringing permanence and unconcealment to the essent'. As against the later falling apart of Being and Seeming with Plato, the great age of Greece was a unique creative self-assertion amid the confusion of the complex struggle between the two powers of Being and Seeming. Seeming belongs to Being itself as appearing and because of this the early Greek thinkers, Parmenides in particular, devoted their main effort to the task of rescuing Being from Seeming by distinguishing it from the latter and from non-Being - it is with this distinction that, as Heidegger says, Western man's historical existence begins. The inner unity of Being and appearance has found concise expression in Heraclitus's saying physis kryptesthai philei i.e. Being, as physis (coming

out of hiddenness) in itself tends to self-concealment to a relapse into that. Being and Seeming are locked together, intrinsically, in the unity of polemos, of perpetual war. Becoming too, like seeing, is not sheer nothing and therefore, though opposed to Being in the sense of what stands out in permanent sameness, is yet comprehended in Being in the larger sense.[24]

The constant attempt to go beyond appearance results in more becoming apparent, a becoming which incites further attempts to transcend appearance. This is process and in his description of man's part in it, Heidegger comes close to Whitehead:

Being in the sense of physis or emergence into unhiddenness, and poein are the same in the sense of inherently belonging together; where unhiddenness occurs and Being prevails, there occurs also, as necessarily implied in it, apprehension. Further, such apprehension, far from being a power exercised by man as a subject, is itself possible to man because he himself is part of Being (physis) and so shares in the apprehending (noein) that is intrinsic to Being. The Being of man himself is determined by the inner unity and togetherness of physis and noein. Apprehension, Heidegger says, is here not a possibility belonging to man, with his nature already defined; apprehension is rather a happening, sharing in which man enters into history as an essent, appears, that is, in the literal sense, comes into being. Apprehension is not a mode of activity which man posses as an attribute; on the contrary, man himself is a function of apprehension.[25]

We have acknowledged Dorn's claim that a detailed knowledge of Heidegger is not necessary for a satisfactory reading of the poem. Nevertheless we must recognize that it is written within a framework of ideas heavily influenced by Heidegger and Heidegger's disciples. British insularity and inimicality of our native philosophical tradition to continental metaphysics have resulted in an underestimation of Heidegger, "the secret king of thought" and his influence. As George Steiner has pointed out, his influence lies behind many of the key figures in European and American philosophy, linguistics and culture criticism, figures we are realizing, tardily, we cannot afford to discount:

> The existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre is, explicitly, a version and critique of the idiom and propositions in Sein und Zeit. Heidegger's explications of Heraclitus, Anaximander, Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle have entered, though in a bitterly contested guise, into the whole current image of Greek thought and civilization. There is now a Heideggerian linguistics or 'metaphysical etymologizing and nominalism'- again both highly controversial and formative. The 'structuralist' and 'hermeneutic' schools of textual interpretation (where 'hermeneutic' signifies the understanding of understanding', the attempt to formalise and describe from within the ways in which we interpret the meanings of meaning) draw copiously on Heidegger, via Gadamer in Germany and Derrida in France. Even more arrestingly, Heidegger's doctrines on the nature of language and poetry have marked literary theory in Germany, in France, in the United States, where the current debate over the nature of a literary text', over the dialectical interactions between poet, reader and language are thoroughly Heideggerian. Indeed they have had their impact on the actual practice of such poets as René Char and Paul Celan. It is now beginning to look as if Mallarmé and Heidegger are the two seminal figures in the current linguistic self-consciousness or 'reflexivity' in literature and criticism.[26]

This passage delineates areas of thought and ideas which we have already discovered in our discussion of Robert Duncan and which we recognize again in the study of Gunslinger. The Greeks, Structuralism, hermeneutics, linguistic self-consciousness, interaction between poet, reader and language; all these concerns are of acknowledged importance in Gunslinger, and indeed are underlying preoccupations in each of the poems we are considering.

It is in Dorn's prologues that we come closest to direct statement of poetic belief and intent. These passages have their own surreal logic, an amalgam of associational thinking and philosophical enquiry, of literary archaisms and ephemeral slang. Dorn himself seems to see them as a device to increase the formal or ritualistic aspects of the poem's performance:

> The main reason is, a narrative is like an evening. There's no way to start it out directly, you have to build the fire and you sit around the fire. You get everything ready, in fact, you know, you lay things out.[27]

Although they are not necessarily consistent with each other, a closer consideration of the prologues may provide a clearer understanding of the different directions and developments in the action of the poem. There is no prologue to the first book which reflects its origin as the poem "An Idle Visitation" first published in The North Atlantic Turbine (London, 1967). This in itself is an indication of the poem's involvement in our external, historical time which a formal symmetry would disguise. The second book does have a prologue, perhaps the least impenetrable of the three. Unlike the other two it is not separated from the rest of its book by a title or a typographic device and indeed there is a suggestion that it may be delivered by Poet, a character whom Dorn sometimes seems to inhabit inside the poem.

> The poet starts the strings
> as sleep inhabits the stage,
> along the silver of a morning raga,
> So this raga disperses
> as the shimmering of its sense goes out [28]

The theme of the prologue is the opposition of 'we' and 'they' who are, at the same time, interchangeable. This is picked up in the body of the poem as the opposition between "we", (Gunslinger and the stage-coach passengers) versus 'they' (Hughes/Robart and his crew). Here, however, 'we' are those who 'wake', who 'see', who are in tune with the universe, who 'live', 'celebrate', 'concur' and are 'collective':

> Our company thus moves collectively
> along the River Rio Grande [29]

The primary opposition of 'we' and 'they' is obscured by pronominal ambiguities and alternating perspectives. Thus as the prologue opens the narrator, be he Dorn or Poet, seems detached, describing the inhabitants of the stage-coach favourably but from the outside:

> This tapestry moves
> as the morning lights up.
> And they who are in it move
> and love its moving [30]

Although still 'they' at this point, this group seem to be within the reach of the harmony of the universe

which would make them 'we'. Their movement is synthesized with the movement of their environment they travel because

> To see
> Is their desire [31]

Perhaps they must be 'they' at this stage because they are still searching, "moving/from sleep to Ideas" and their quest does have the effect of estranging them from the rest of humanity:

> they wander estranged
> through the lanes of the Tenders
> of Objects [32]

These disparaged creatures, later the dwellers of Universe City, do not even warrant a 'they'. Immersed in matter, they 'sleep', are 'blind', dominated by material objects and 'separate events'. They dance 'wide eyed' to a tune which they cannot recognize; they seek a 'plan' but instead are ruled by a 'schedule'. However, both groups remain 'they' as they fail to overcome the dualistic drift, the materialists plunged in the sleep of matter, the idealists aroused and in pursuit of the Idea. Only when they truly wake to the present live moment can they become 'we'

> All may wake who live
> the combination is given [33]

The transition to 'we' is effected through a transition from history, diachronic events, "Time does not consent", to myth and ritual which, according to Levi-Strauss, lie outside historical time and perform a unifying function, "Only celebrations concur". Myth, re-enacted in ritual such as epic recitation, dance, theatre, the Christian Mass, reveals inner reality, the 'plan':

> we concur To See
> The Universe [34]

In the belief of Levi-Strauss, myth, analyzed according to structuralist principles, will reveal a non-rational or concrete logic which is universal, the product of the collective unconscious. We have access to this collective

unconscious through dream, myth, fairy-tale and it is hoped, through poetry. The travellers on the stage-coach are engaged on the same quest as, differently, are the structural anthropologists.

Levi-Strauss's thought here dovetails with Heideggerian teaching for, according to Heidegger, it is our own sophistication, our outline which has disguised from us the real nature of Being:

> Our preparatory Interpretation of the fundamental structure of Dasein with regard to the average kind of Being which is closest to it (a kind of Being in which it is therefore proximately historical as well), will make manifest, however, not only that Dasein is inclined to fall back upon its world (the world in which it is) and to interpret itself in terms of that world by its reflected light but also that Dasein simultaneously falls prey to the tradition of which it has more or less explictly taken hold. This tradition keeps it from providing its own guidance, whether in inquiring or in choosing. This holds true - and by no means least - for that understanding which is rooted in Dasein's own most Being, and for the possibility of developing it - namely for ojtological understanding. When tradition thus becomes master, it does so in such a way that what it 'transmits' is made so inaccessible, proximally and for the most part, that it rather becomes concealed.[35]

It is the world which is too much with us, which encourages us to lapse into being "Tenders of Objects" which removes us from authentic existence, the reality of our own Being.

This prologue proclaims the quest as the effort to integrate fragmented consciousness at the individual and universal levels and to achieve the understanding of Reality, especially human reality, the "Human Thing". The recitation is relinquished to poem's Poet whose poem or raga is said to penetrate appearance to the inner structure, the world-tree ("Ygdrasillic yoga") which supports us. Only through this vision and understanding, again a Heideggerian notion, can we project ourselves into the future.

> Oh quickbeam! oh quake and sway into waking
> With aspergill enter Into the future [36]

If we take the quickbeam to be at once Yggdrasil, the world-ash, and the stage-coach, "quaking and swaying", we perceive that the quest for self-understanding, for the reality of "man-in-the-world" is at the same time a possibility for and a blessing of the future. The shaking leaves of Yggdrasil sprinkle holy water, like an aspergill, on what is to come, the world- project. In Heidegger's thought, self-understanding and the creation of the future were to be achieved through language, through poetry:

> We do not learn what man is by learned definition; we learn it only when man contends with the essent, striving to bring it into its being, i.e. into limit and form, that is to say when he projects something new (not yet present) when he creates original poetry, when he builds poetically.[37]

This prologue together with our recollections of Book I provide us with certain expectations. We know that we are engaged on a spiritual quest which is also, probably, a quest for Howard Hughes. We know that there is a division between questers and those ordinary mortals who are blinded by everyday concerns. Already, I's existence has been made precarious; as an individual, separated self or ego, he had been threatened by Slinger and Horse. Now, in the second Book, in a hilarious episode, "mind-blown" by consciousness-expanding drugs, I dies. However, in his place, the coach has picked up the hitch-hiker, Kool Everything, an unlikeable character who is the consequence of I's death:

> What keeps you beside the road?
>
> Dispersal, friend
> my Head has been misplaced.[38]

The simple destruction of the ego is not, therefore, the answer. In fact, it turns out that I is not dead but had gone ahead to Universe City. For full integration of consciousness I must return to the team, an event which does not take place until Book IIII by which time circumstances have changed anyway.

The central figure in Book II is Poet; the action is the journey to Universe City which is punctuated by his poems and undertaken largely in order that he may deliver The Cycle Poet, as narrator, takes over the role of "mortal I", while as Singer, he moves towards Slinger, towards the "semi-dios". Poet's poems should be poems within a poem but they seem at times to become the outer poem, reminding us that we are within a universe subject to the laws of linguistics not of physics. We have already noticed that the prologue may in fact be Poet's morning raga. His next two poems create the morning and the time of the journey, for this is a journey through words, not through space. "Cool Liquid Comes" is an enabling poem, a prophecy, projecting the future, a poem demanded by Slinger:

> so that the roots of my soul
> may be loosened and grow past
> the hardness of the Future [39]

and as such, a task almost beyond Poet's powers. In the world of language, Poet has the undisputed power to invoke, to call into being. Here, he prophesies the journey:

> Cool dry,
> Shall come the results of inquiry
> out of the larks throat
> oh people of the coming stage [40]

In this pun we read an aspiration towards some sort of new synthesis, a new race, the familiar prophecy of the new Adam who must emerge beyond the

> temptation of survival
> oh lusterless hope
> of victory in opposites [41]

But the Poet's major task, his masterpiece, is The Cycle. The Literate Projector is a notion which fades out of the book, but serves here to show that in this poem actions become words, or that words are the action. It is Kool Everything, the media man, who must call the poet a "Literate Projector". The recitation which introduces Robart and his crew is prescribed by

Gunslinger for the inhabitants of Universe City. Its purpose is to show them who they are, and as audience, they take part in a kind of celebration and become "We":

> O Singer, we are assembled here
> beneath the rafters of the tanner's shed
> Turn the Great Cycle of the Enchanted Wallet
> of Robart the Valfather of this race
> turn the Cycle of Acquisition
> inside Cobalt Heads of these
> otherwise lumpish listeners make
> their azures senses warm Make your norm
> their own - deliver them
> from their Vicious Isolation [42]

However, this "we" exists only in relation to a new "they" - Robart and his crew, a new schism which ought in its turn to be resolved. In fact, it is not. The direction of the poem changes in Books III and IIII and the poem, although it stops, does not come to an end. There is neither resolution nor showdown; the threat of Robart recedes, Slinger decides to go home. The conclusion of the poem which is the consequence of Slinger's departure, seems as arbitrary as the end of a factory shift:

> But now niños it is time for me to go inside
> I must catch the timetrain [43]

Time and the nature of time are a central concern. In the poem Time is understood as our condition, events are framed by the cycles of the sun and the moon. Again this accords with Heidegger, for whom Being or Dasein - our Being in the World - must be understood in terms of time:

> Time must be brought to light - and genuinely conceived - as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it. In order for us to discern this, <u>time</u> needs to be explicated <u>primordially</u> as the region for the <u>Understanding</u> of Being, and in terms of temporality as the Being of Dasein, which understands Being.[44]

Heidegger, unlike Bergson, does not reject our ordinary conception of time and physical limit:

> We shall thereby restoreto the ordinary conception the autonomy which is its rightful due, as against Bergson's thesis that the time one has in mind in this conception is space [45]

This acknowledgement of the obduracy of time, "Time does not consent", may seem to sacrifice the subjective power which lies in the notion of Bergsonian real time. But such extreme relativity leads to solipsism while the ordinary conception permits us to share a common world in which we communicate and where we may still hope to transcend time by way of such vehicles as the poem itself.

Gunslinger presents us with at least three orders of time with which we must come to terms. These are the poet's time, presumably 1965-1975, the period of composition; the poem's time, apparently two days and two nights; and our own time, the time it takes to read it, the time of our first reading and of all our subsequent readings. Reading convention is to blank out our own time and that of the poet and to concentrate on the poem's internal or fictional time. The historical critic might wish to investigate the poet's time, the circumstances of composition, personal and political background and so forth. This approach might provide a firmer understanding of the poem's genesis and growth, but the conventional critic will still tend to think in terms of an ideal poem, a Platonic text which the vagaries of time and space and the poet's frailties have prevented him from achieving. As for the time in which we ourselves receive the poem, this has, until quite recently, been almost ignored. One of the major differences, for instance, between a book-length poem like Gunslinger and a lyric is quite simply the time it takes to read and hence the difference in our mode of reception. Unlike a lyric, a book-length poem cannot be grasped all at once, structure and detail, except perhaps very rarely in a flash of insight, or moment of vision where the reader shares in the poet's privilege of creation. As a rule, neither poet nor reader can be expected to take in the entirety. Rather, the long poem becomes a region to which we return and which is gradually more familiar. All we can hope for is the enrichment of the particular aspects of particular moments in our relationship with the work.

The poem itself acts as a communication, as a bridge between the poem's time and our time. Gunslinger does not allow us to forget these different orders of time, so that we are forced to recognize the poem as alive, continuing through composition and interpretation. We cannot ignore the process of composition for several different version or "takes" of Gunslinger are extant, from the earliest prototype, "An Idle Visitation" to the completed volume of Books I to IIII which came out in 1975. The early poem has all the appearance of spontaneous inspiration:

> I published it in this book (The North Atlantic Turbine) and then later I saw that it was the start. It was so open-ended that I recognized it later as being there for me if I wanted it. I mean I had left it there for myself which I didn't recognize straight off. I didn't start out with the intention of writing a big poem. But I saw it as a structure that was built in such a way that it could be extended.[46]

Something between lyric and narrative its has the surrealist atmosphere of dream, perhaps a dream following an unhappy love affair. In it I is the poet himself, or a persona of him. In Books I and II, published in 1970. I is already detached, becomes the ego and is killed. In this version the love affair is reduced in significance when the portentous lines

> as when two persons meet
> it is the grove of Gethsemane
> no matter where they are [47]

are eliminated.

The revisions of 1970 and 1975 do not simply alter the text; they follow from the text. For instance, in "An Idle Visitation" we are told

> If it is all you have
> the footstep in the flat above, in a foreign land
> or any shimmer the city
> sends you
> the prompt sounds
> of a metropolitan nearness
> he doesn't have to unroll the map of love

In 1970, this becomes

he will unroll the map of love

so that the level of personal emotion is reduced. The first version stated that certain experiences of love and loneliness enable one to appreciate Slinger's domain without a map. In the second, I's experience has qualified him as an initiate who may see the map of love. In the 1975 version, the "map of love" has become the "map of locations", but we heed the successive texts to understand how the two may be synonymous. Love is energy and any locus, location, moment in space-time is a meeting of energies - love makes the world go round.

connection meant is
Instant in extent a proposal of limit [48]

So we move from the lyric of lost love to the new physics of the discontinuous universe.

Between 1970 and 1975 Dorn made a number of changes which do not seem to make any radical difference to the poem, but which may reflect changes in political perspectives and personal circumstances as well as intervening historical events. The Spanish American influence is much more marked in 1975. "Slingo" becomes "Senor" (p.114), "Far, far out" becomes "Muy, muy insoportable" (p.156) "you dig" becomes the neo-colonial "Comprende Bwana". This may have to do with, on the one hand, Dorn's own time in New Mexico, and, on the other hand, the political emergence of ethnic minorities in the U.S.A. and elsewhere.

In his interview with Barry Alpert, Dorn discusses the composition of the long poem, especially in relation to Book IIII:

...Book IV is formed in my mind in its most monstrous sense. I'm just waiting to repeal a lot of that... the moment comes when the pressure is so great that there is no possibility of losing it because the pressure itself just dictates when it comes. In other words its a poetic content like a mega-content.

> Not a simple content as in a domestic poem where the idea, where the distance from the beginning to the end of the idea is within your fingers. This poem we're talking about is not just measurable in that way. Long poems interest me also, not just the narrative. I think actually I learned a lot from how Charles (Olson) worked, not that he ever told me that much about it, but I mean just from the demonstration of it. I learned the possibilities of holding it over a long time, you know, years. Really, it's so much your life, actually. You cast out ahead of yourself all this, like in a fan or a radius, and you go forward in it and then the account of that is art, it can be art. That's the ambition.[49]

This reveals both that Dorn felt that he had an overall conception of the poem and that the execution over time was bound to differ from the initial plan. The time lapse has its own effects on the internal time of the poem, for events which occur in Book I seem in retrospect from Book IIII to have altered. Moreover, external time seems at least once to intrude into the poem's time:

> Lets hear about your tour, I
> Lil requested,
> since that cold sicksties night
> in Blackturkey, New Mexico, remember
> when you got that cubic mile of air
> pumped into your head?
> We'd like to hear how ameliorating
> you thought any of that stuff was[50]

This could refer to something outside the action of the poem, but it could equally be a reference to I's initiatory turn-on in Book I:

> Here
> he said, passing me the cigarette [51]

which leads to his temporary death in Book II. At the same time, the allusion may extend beyond I to the actual experience of Dorn or some other person.

The time or time-space of the poem, its internal history is exceedingly difficult to follow. Nevertheless it is possible to extrapolate a sequence of events, of a plot from the recurrences and fragmentations of the poem.

As we have seen, there is a basic opposition between "we" and "them", most clearly defined as Gunslinger and the stage-coach passengers on the one side and Hughes/ Robart and his crew, on the other. They are both engaged on journeys, either in pursuit of or in flight from each other, but the stage-coach appears by day while the train seems to go by night. The action of the poem apparently covers two days and two nights, although there is every indication that this period is arbitrary, unreal. It is experienced through drugs, it takes place during an Epactos - the period in of days by which the solar cycle exceeds the lunar cycle and which in Mexico and Mayan culture was particularly sacred, known as Waiting Days when nothing was done, houses were cleared out, old crockery smashed and the new year prepared for. These two "unreal days"

> The phone on the stagecoach wall then Rang
> and the Horse picked it up
> February 31st! he said into the mouthpiece [52]

contain condensed or implicit all previous and future action. What takes place has happened before and will be repeated. There is no confrontation; nothing is conclusive.

In Book I, I meets Gunslinger in Mesilla which lies in New Mexico, on the Rio Grande, close to the borders of Mexico and Texas. I is also introduced to the Horse, Singer/Poet and Lil. However, already events are repeating themselves. The talking horse has passed through Mesilla before, on that occasion with a Texan; he was introduced to drugs by a wrangler from Wyoming, "THE Word", and they left for Amarillo on a stage-coach. On this occasion, Slinger whom we may consider as the Logos, meets and again I is turned on and breaks into speech. In the first episode there is conflict over a girl which is transferred to the Horse; in the second I has a girl in his background, but the centre of interest seems to move from her to the Horse as the Horse changes from a neurasthenic mare to a talking stallion. As Book I closes they all set off in pursuit of Hughes who is in

Boston or Las Vegas. Their journey is northwards along the River Rio Grande, presumably on Interstate Highway 25. In Book II they pick up Kool Everything and I dies; the company arrive in Truth or Consequences known as Universe City where they set up a performance of The Cycle on a machine called the Literate Projector. While doing this they meet Dr. Flamboyant, a Ph.D. whose presence suggests that Universe City is also University City.

The screening of The Cycle is in fact the delivery of a poem, a performance which mimics our own relationship with the work as a whole. The planes of reality are further confused because events in The Cycle occur as they are recited in the lives of the listeners, while the events in the lives of listeners, Gunslinger and the stage-coach company are incorporated into The Cycle. Because the whole is a work of language word can create events as well as recording and recalling them, a form of magic poets have aspired to but which cannot be achieved directly in the physical world, although one justification of poetry is its power to invent possibilities which may be put into physical effect.

I am not alone in finding the events of The Cycle baffling:

> I really lost almost everybody on The Cycle. That's why in a strange way, I felt it had to have some illustrations and color and so forth because the language is kind of unremittently obscure on top. But any careful reader would have known that this is simply what was going to happen all the time. Which was that Robart left the hotel he was staying in in Boston to go to Las Vegas... His existence is an echo, in a strange way, it's an echo of the psychological condition of the United States of America. Therefore, the interior is a negative quantity, its anti-gravitational. It doesn't suddenly involve astro-physics. It's like a black hole among us...[53]

Nevertheless, we can extract significant structural features. Robart is one aspect of Hughes, though by the

very fact of his appearance, not the whole of the Hughes mystery, and therefore not the authentic Hughes, or object of the quest. He leaves Boston with his henchmen, apparently by night, disguised as the cheese in a cheeseburger. It is suggested that power and possessions are kept from the people despite the affectations of democracy. The obscurity of the language and surrealistic narrative disguises fairly direct political satire in the tradition of Blake, Shelley and Byron:

> In the dangerous disguise of Nobody
> He ran up a flag of John Adams in drag [54]

Unlike Slinger, Robart is sealed from the outside world; he does not experience actual phenomena, only data as it is relayed by various electronic media. The suggestion is that this journey is also a drug trip:

> 34 Now the slow exotic periods of the wheels
> Across the sections of track as the car
> Goes over the accordion rails to the Main Line
> The design of the Goddess herself
>
> 35 Is tacked to the board as the car tacs
> To the Main Line, this is not about haulage
> Tied up at the dock in ships, this is the Inventory
> And then the Overhaul of the fucking mind [55]

We are confused, because this seems, at least in part, to be the mission of Gunslinger. Robart, though evil, or apparently evil, seems to need the stage-coach party, and it seems, conversely, to need him. If Robart's carriage is negative, a black hole, it must need the positive, i.e. the Stage-coach to feed it:

> Find me a crack that ain't been surrendered in
> Find me a crack from Way up ahead [56]

Robart's car seems to represent the trap of unauthentic Dasein, the trap of convention:

> When tradition thus becomes master, it does so in such a way that what it transmits is made so inaccessible, proximally and for the most part that it rather becomes concealed. Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks access to those primordial 'sources' from which categories and concepts handed down to us have been quite genuinely drawn [57]

[50]Each datum is caught I got em
And stored cold in a special future
... ...
[52]What has been run thus far
Is what has been run before
Its what can be seen from the floor
It wont make us lock up the store [58]

Robart has a right-hand man, Al, code-named Rupert, who may be just another form of Robart himself. Al may be one of the living Atlantes, half-men, half-columns, who service the chariot, or may himself have a favourite

whos name is Al
After his master [59]

The Atlantes tend the high powered communication equipment through which they receive word of the stage-coach:

[49]I think this is it Boss
The crack we been waiting for
The scanners have picked off
A telegram to Parmenides
[50]From a point on the arc
2 days minus 4 corners
We sure know where that's at Boss,
We can find it in the dark [60]

This news returns us to Universe City at sunset and precipitates the continuation of the journey

from the smell brought in by the winde
We have news of the Master Nark
who trailed us into your cycle [61]

The inner and outer poems have fused:

Yet there is another, an Unknown
Who tracks us
Some one whose fame is his Name.[62]

This someone is the full mystery of Hughes, which the various named emanations in the Car fail to equal. A reversal has taken place, the trackers have become the track, or perhaps each is the other's lure.

In Book III the stage-coach continues along a route which be traced on the map. Route 25 does parallel the railway track along the Rio Grande between Los Padillos

and Algodones through the lands of the Sandias Indians. From here, however, the journey becomes more difficult to trace, as Slinger may perhaps be warning us as well as the Poet:

> the poet interrupted, Slinger?
> Do you foresee the Master Nark
> Interpreting our route
>
> Thats not possible to say
> returned the Slinger swaying in the coach
> He's so complicated he believes
> the shortest distance between two states
> is a straight line [63]

Certainly, the next mentioned village, "Mexican Hat" is in Utah, miles from the Rio Grande, on the other side of Four Corners which itself lies on the intersections of the state lines of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. Yet three or four pages later we return to Madrid and Cerillos just outside Santa Fe. When the stage-coach reaches Santa Fe they make a connection or pick up some drugs, which are in other words, or metaphorically, the Night Letter from the Secretary to Parmenides. At the same time, Dr. Flamboyant rejoins the crew through his Turning machine. Everything seems prepared for confrontation in Book IIII.

As it opens we find ourselves travelling through Colorado with Robart towards Four Corners. Apparently he has two armies under his command, the Mogollons, perhaps a native tribe from Mogollon, New Mexico, and the Single Spacers. However, for some reason, the Mogollons and the Single Spacers are set on each other, Robart loses control and flees over the border. The reader is totally confused about what has happened and in the end it seems fairly unimportant or unreal. Perhaps it is all part of The Cycle screened in Universe City:

> But that's no hoss
> the Doctor said, look
> at the screen [64]

The physical events of Book III and IIII are less important than what is happening to "Our Mind" during

this drug-influenced quest after knowledge. In Book III it is winter, the nadir of the poem when the lack of the ego, or some sort of renewing organizing principle is felt. The prologue acknowledges that the death of the ego is not enough; new life involves conflict and will:

> the dissected earth includes the contrary
> over which our heads are not pervasive
> for there the night force increaseth
> "a rite
> not of passage
> but of penetration
> a cellular destruction
>
> an act
> of will"
>
> the maneuvers of a brilliant ghost
> who returns with a longer stride
> in his eye [65]

It becomes necessary to acknowledge and accept the negative. Consequently, the clear distinction between the inhabitants of the stage-coach and those in the Winged Car breaks down. I returns to the stage-coach as Indica Jack, a consummation which even Slinger prays for:

> Oh Jack, the Slinger prayed
> I want you to feel
> and in your feeling move your bones
> for the want now of your access
> in this time so little beyond you
> and which needs your moving nerve [66]

But this Indica Jack who has "got his gnosis in a sack on his back"[67] is a much more problematic character than the naive individual who perished in Book II. He is the Secretary to Parmenides who delivers his message, the Night Letter, via a

> goggled bi-plane pilot
> hung from a pure hemp line [68]

but this night letter seems to link him to Sllab. Indeed he may even be Bean, Sllab's messenger. So much is hinted in this complicated piece of word-play put into the mouth of the Pilot, where the verbal ambiguities reflect the ambiguities of reality.

And I have brought you the data
in this here night letta

uhHuh, what's back ofit ?

The One

uhHuh, what's that?

A tricky plea
to deny
the 'other' hand of reality

Is that the code?
No that's the imagery
The Code
is Sllab -

I'll take a stab the Slinger said
Who's that

There is but one Sllab ahead
(don't look back
and Bean is his messenger

We have reckoned that
the Slinger said
from the shape of your head [69]

We must recognize here that reference is being made to different types of drugs and their relative merits. Throughout the poem the special language of the drug culture acts as a barrier to the uninitiated reader. In the first place, he may simply fail to understand and secondly he is left unsure of how he should react to the apparent mythologizing of drug use. However, behind the drug imagery we recognize the recurrent theme: the relation of the One to the Many and the error of asserting the reality of either at the expense of the other. Again, the resolution is discovered in process, the oscillation between the primordial and the ultimate, the discovery of the future in the past: "There is but one Sllab ahead...and Bean (or Been) is his messenger".

From what we know of Sllab he seems to be the same as Hughes, the unnameable, the vanished God, the void behind all physical and social phenomena. Confronted again with the themes of Being and Nothingness we are returned to our own time and forced to extrapolate events and significant structure from the poem. In a work which is so ambiguous and obscure, the reader is made

to participate and made to be conscious of his participation in the creation of meaning. Each reading will lead to an extended or variant interpretation of the kaleidoscopic repeating elements in the poem. Thus the process of the poem continues through its readership and the possibilities for changing or enlarging understanding come from the reader's own circumstances, his time, his awareness, his knowledge. For instance, my own interpretation of the poem was considerably altered even by my first very limited reading in Heidegger's philosophy. This is inevitable, even though many of the Heideggerian implications or echoes which I have identified may not have been intended by Dorn. The poem is so open that the reader is tempted, even obliged, to impose his own structure upon it, a structure which yields temporary satisfaction, but which in the end the poem resists, inciting the reader to furthe efforts. This is what should happen if the reader is sufficiently engaged, but there is a danger that the opposite may happen, that the reader may be so baffled, so irritated by the work that he rejects it. Dorn may have come close to this, risking the good will even of those best-disposed towards the work, very largely through the fragmentation of Book IIII and the excess of private reference discussed earlier.

In the end, as reader I can only offer my own interpretation, forced by the poem to acknowledge that my construction is temporary and subjective, conditioned by the current set of my ideas and knowledge, conditioned by my interaction with the text at this point of my time.

Gunslinger reenacts traditional themes. At the level of parody and at the same time quite seriously, it is a quest for identity, for self-knowledge, a consideration of the problems of good and evil, of the nature of time, of the nature of being. The characters are not discriminated individuals but parts of the psyche, at once the poet's psyche and the representative

human psyche.[70] They cannot therefore be wholly separated and their roles are often interchangeable. Even the names are ambiguous: I/Poet, Slinger/Singer. These characters cover the range of the human mind as it spans from the animal to the divine. As in traditional epic and myth the hero, half-god, "semi-dios" is accompanied by a creature who is half-man, half-animal, at once lower than man and through his innocence, his noble savagery, - higher.

In the first group of characters Lil is included presumably as the feminine component of the psyche. Her part is perhaps the least satisfactory for too often Dorn does not speak through her, but about her. Too often she fails to rise above her stereotype:

> I love Lil, but she gets to seem more like a resident woman. It's true reflection of what's actual - the woman in a man's world which is an occasion you don't have to walk far to find. I treat her with all the respect I have for her. That is a problem actually. [71]

This is an honest statement, and it is difficult to see how Dorn could have done otherwise, since he can only write from the state of his own mind. There are signs in the increasing fragmentation of Book IIII that Lil may be moving closer to the other characters; in fact, at the end of the poem she seems to have a special relationship with Slinger:

> I have this incomparable feeling
> and it keeps calling me home
> a feeling of Wyoming
> I'd like to get back
> before they tear off the dome [72]

This speech parallels Slinger's own farewell speech and seems to refer back to an earlier version of the action, when the Slinger figure was the wrangler from Wyoming who first introduced the Horse to drugs. Yet her apartness from the male characters in the final version is, if anything, increased, especially as all her speeches are italicized. As "resident woman" Lil accommodates,

with some degree of strain, all the female stereotypes; whore with the heart of gold, sweetheart, the eternal feminine

> Lil,
> I didn't expect to see
> here - we were in Smyrna
> together, now called Izmir
> when they burned the place
> Down, we were
> very young then [73]

She may also have been Gladys (or Helen. 1970) in Egypt (p.35, "I was with Gladys in Egypt"). Yet in the end Lil's importance is peripheral.

The real action concerns the quest for the mystery, code-named Hughes or Sllab. Originally this mystery is conceived as the eternal One, the undivided reality behind all appearances, the integrated God at the end of the Ages. However, as the poem develops we encounter the problem of evil. If the stage-coach passengers are seeking the One which is total self-knowledge and integration of the psyche, where the ego has been overcome and reduced to its proper importance as guide or director of a totally aware consciousness, then the evil in the world must be either assimilated or destroyed. At first, it seems there will be a traditional confrontation between Slinger and the forces of darkness in the Winged Car. However, there are difficulties. Is Hughes/Sllab the One, the plenum to be achieved, or the dragon of the pit, Tiamator Grendel, to be fled or destroyed. To reflect this difficulty, halfway through the poem the hunters become the hunted; Slinger and Poet flee the Master Nark. Yet Robart and Slinger are still headed for the same destination, Four Corners, though it's not apparent that they get there, unless the Hill of Beans is at Four Corners and is not the sacred Apache Mescal Mountain. On the other hand, geography becomes so scrambled in the end of the poem that it could plausibly be argued that it is both. But the gathering of all the forces is never complete. There is no confrontation, Robart red-shifts away, Slinger returns to his own planet.

An ending would betray reality, the reality which is process. To achieve wholeness apart from the wholeness of the moment would be to end time; "connection meant is /Instant in extent a proposal of limit". Each moment has its synthesis, greater or less, which is lost as it happens. As the past becomes unreal it becomes available, in Whitehead's language, for prehension in the next actual event.

> Everything is prehensible
> For from that which is not
> we fall off [74]

The unreal is the unrealised, the void is what we do not know or have not acknowledged. As it is unknown, it is evil and other. The easy, ignorant way is not to know, to renounce the evil behind society, to turn away or drop out. But to choose this path is to reject the possibility of enlightenment or self-knowledge. If, for instance, drugs are used as the path to spiritual knowledge, at the same time the user acknowledges the power of the Man and implicates himself in the capitalist ss system. In dialectic, synthesis proceeds from positive and negative. In Gunslinger the evil of Hughes is to some extent discovered and recognized; Slinger lights up a Sullivan (p.180) which was Robart's attribute earlier in the book; I, on his return, is no angel but behaves with many of the characteristics of the Ugly American:

> Just for today
> I will not be afraid
> and I will enjoy murdering
> now that I can perform
> all by myself, an act of oblivion [75]

At one level he is acknowledging his own complicity in American experience and the Vietnam war:

> A 50 Caliber Derringer
> sprung out of I's right sleeve
> and drilled two test holes
> in the manager's skull
>
> Whaaâ, Everything stammered
> as the manager hung by a finger
> from Everything's ear
>
> It's OK I said, theres no Ban
> on mobile weapons, remember?
> Salt talks,
> or as Dr. Johnson said:

if Public war be allowed
to be consistent with morality
Private war must be equally so [76]

We may not like the new I very much. For although each synthesis is doomed to perish, to become unreal it is still an achievement. The fact that the process is endless, or as endless as Time, does not make it futile. Acknowledgement of evil is a necessary step in overcoming it. Increase in what is known returns us immediately to what is unknown, but the reality of each moment is enriched by the increase in knowledge. So the poem has no conclusion, it gives us no answers, or at least it gives us a number of different answers and fresh answers with fresh questions on each rereading. The poem fulfills the function of traditional epic and myth. Combining and recombining the basic elements of our experience, it instructs, entertains and unites us.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHT

[1] Back cover of Edward Dorn, Slinger (Berkeley, 1975).

[2] Hugh MacDiarmid, In Memoriam James Joyce, p.

[3] Interview with Roy Okada, Contemporary Literature XV, 3 p.308.

[4] Donald Davie, "Ed Dorn and The Treasures of Comedy", Vort 1, (Fall, 1972) p.24.

[5] Interview with Barry Alpert in Vort (Fall, 1972) p.18.

[6] Slinger, p.12.

[7] Slinger, p.87.

[8] Alpert interview, p.15.

[9] Slinger, p.44 (Sonnet 98).

[10] Slinger, p.24.

[11] Slinger, p.36.

[12] Ed Dorn, Review of Robert Creeley's Pieces in Caterpillar 10, (Jan., 1970).

[13] Slinger, p.76.

[14] Alpert, p.20. See also Okada, p.311

[15] Slinger, p.129.

[16] Slinger, p.160.

[17] Slinger, p.162.

[18] Slinger, p.162.

[19] Alpert, p.16.

[20] Kirk & Raven, The PreSocratic Philosophers (Cambridge, 1957) p.267.

[21] Slinger, p.131.

[22] Kirk & Raven, p.277.

[23] Slinger, p.112.

[24] J.L. Mehta, The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger (San Francisco, 1971) p.143.

[25] Mehta, p.145.

[26] George Steiner, Heidegger, Fontana Modern Masters (Glasgow, 1978) p.13.

[27] Alpert, p.17.

[28] Slinger, p.43.

[29] Slinger, p.43.

[30] Slinger, p.42.

[31] Slinger, p.43.

32 Slinger, p.42.

33 Slinger, p.43.

34 Slinger, p.43.

35 Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, pp.42-43.

36 Slinger, p.44.

37 Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, translated by Ralph Manheim (Yale, 1959) p.144

38 Slinger, p.51.

39 Slinger, p.46.

40 Slinger, p.48.

41 Slinger, p.48.

42 Slinger, p.86.

43 Slinger, p.195.

44 Being and Time, p.39.

45 Being and Time, p.39.

46 Okada, p.30.

47 Ed Dorn, The North Atlantic Turbine (London, 1967) p.60.

48 Slinger, p.112.

49 Alpert, pp.19-20.

50 Slinger, pp.155-156.

51 Slinger, p.15.

52 Slinger, p.132.

53 Alpert, p.18.

54 Slinger, p.89.

55 Slinger, p.91.

56 Slinger, p.93.

57 Being and Time, p.43.

58 Slinger, p.94.

59 Slinger, p.101.

60 Slinger, p.106.

61 Slinger, p.106.

62 Slinger, p.106.

63 Slinger, p.115.

64 Slinger, p.193.

65 Slinger, p.112.

66 Slinger, p.118.

67 Slinger, p.118.

68 Slinger, p.128.

69 Slinger, pp.128-129.

70 See Alpert, p.16.

71 Okada, p.311.

72 Slinger, p.196.

73 Slinger, p.18.

74 Slinger, p.134.

75 Slinger, p.150.

76 Slinger, p.153.

CONCLUSION

In this study I have been concerned with the possibility of a long poem in open form. I have discussed four long poems which in their different ways move towards open form and which may be interpreted in terms of a poetics of process. The four poems selected are very different from each other yet from these readings of them and from the consideration of contemporary developments in criticism and poetic theory certain conclusions emerge.

Each of these poems has pretensions towards epic. Each has a public dimension, each is concerned with myth and history, the traditional themes of epic. Yet none of them uses the traditional epic structure of narrative. As poems of open form their structure is internal and proceeds from the generation of metaphor. Theories of metaphor and of open or organic form go back far behind the Imagists, at least to Coleridge. However, in the modern period the recognition of the centrality of the image, the image which is the product of metaphoric process, came from the Imagists. For this reason, it seemed reasonable to begin the investigation of poetic theory with the origins of the Imagist movement in the work of T.E. Hulme and, behind him, in the writings of Henri Bergson.

It became clear that although the moment of Imagism united a number of significant poets in the attempt to reform and renew poetry, the ideas or doctrines which it embraced were differently interpreted and gave rise to two very different developments in poetry. These two strands of thought were already identified by T.E. Hulme in his distinction between romanticism and classicism, monism and dualism. As we have seen, Hulme declared himself as a classicist and a duallist. But we also saw that the poem of open form, the poem whose creative principle is the development of metaphor, must be based on a unitive and dynamic metaphysics. If metaphor within the poem is to be allowed to determine the poem's course, then the poet must be moved by a conviction

of the real significance and effectiveness of language.

Metaphor works by establishing connections between different elements, in I.A. Richards's terminology, between tenor and vehicle. But the metaphor itself is neither tenor nor vehicle, but the connection between or product of the two. It is a recorded recognition of sameness in difference and as such attests to notions of pattern, order and structure in the universe.

Ezra Pound, the Vorticists and later, the Objectivists placed their faith in the congruence of mind and the external world. For Pound, the image-vortex was a concentration of energy, a fusion of subjective and objective in itself revelatory and at the same time a source of energy from which further images and ideas might spring:

> The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster, it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing. [1]

We recognise the same concept in Olson's Projective Verse:

> ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION [2]

For these poets, from Pound through to Olson, the poem has the same reality as every other form, including forms of consciousness, in that it is an organisation or structure of energy. As such it is capable of being influenced by the world, of prehending its being from mind and matter, and it is also capable of working on the world, of articulating and communicating reality. In their belief in the fundamental unity of mind and matter, these poets are, as Hulme saw, humanists or at least inclined towards natural religion. Eliot and the New Critics, on the other hand, adhered to the religion or classicist position and a dualist metaphysics which manifests itself in a dualistic theory of knowledge.

The term "Post-Modern" has an ugly, neologistic ring about it, but it does serve to distinguish those writers who belong to the line of development we have traced from

Pound to Olson from the other, conventionally accepted tradition of modernism, dominated by Eliot and the New Critics. David Jones and Hugh MacDiarmid, the two earlier, British poets discussed in this study, fall somewhere between the two schools. Although influenced by the poetic theories of their time, they were both eccentrics and this eccentricity allowed their poetry to develop towards "proto" post-modernism and an anticipation of open form.

In the case of David Jones, his cosmology is unitive, but theoretically at least, this unity is predicated on the goodness of God, and is thus consistent both with Hulme's doctrines and with Catholic theology. In fact, as we have seen, the vision to emerge from The Anathemata is surely heretical, for it is fundamentally humanist and celebrates Man as the Artist. It is Man who creates God, or himself as God, through his art and the central or informing idea of the poem, for which even the crucifixion is a metaphor, in the human act of creation.

MacDiarmid vehemently eschews religion and of course he avows, in however perverse a form, Marxist dialectical materialism. However, his poetry may be said to lie somewhere between Whitman and Whitehead, like Whitman in his desire to write it all down, like Whitehead in his oscillation between the two Silences, the Silence of Chaos and the Silence of the achieved Logos, the articulated plenum, between the Category of the Primordial and the Category of the Ultimate. But for MacDiarmid also, the place where extremes do meet is in the language of the poem and it is the poem which is the instrument of knowledge taking us from the known into the unknown, forwarding evolution as it increases the degree of organisation and raises consciousness.

We have seen that the notion of different kinds of knowledge, scientific and poetic, is profoundly unsatisfactory. Yet we can understand the attractiveness of positivist scientific method, or rational empiricism. Knowledge as the product of reasoned conclusions drawn from objective observations of the external world offers a

possibility of stability and security absent since the decline of religious belief. Even if the descriptive and conceptualising language of science is abstract and at a remove from reality, nevertheless it offers explanations and has predictive force. Moreover, rational argument and discussion in a world where irrationalism has led to havoc and destruction may seem to be the only safeguard of civilised life and values. The mode of rational enquiry has created the modern world and from it man has gained huge knowledge. To abandon it may seem a foolhardy enterprise.

Nevertheless, the notion of scientific knowledge which the epistemological dualists propound in their poetic theories has itself been abandoned by contemporary scientists. They, ironically, have moved much closer to the traditional idea of poetry.

> The uncertainty principle rigorously brings us to the realisation that there is no "My Way" which is separate from the world around us. It brings into question the very existence of an "objective" reality, as does complementarity and the concept of particles as correlations.
>
> The tables have been turned. "The exact sciences" no longer study an objective reality that runs its course regardless of our interest in it or not, leaving us to fare as best we can while it goes its predetermined way. Science, at the level of subatomic events, is no longer exact, the distinction between objective and subjective has vanished, and the portals through which the universe manifests itself are, as we once knew a long time ago, those impotent, passive witnesses to its unfolding, the "I"s, of which we, insignificant we, are examples. The Cogs in the Machine have become the Creators of the Universe.
>
> If the new physics has led us anywhere, it is back to ourselves which, of course, is the only place that we could go.[3]

As Olson recognised, Man is returned firmly to the centre of the universe. He is, in Heidegger's terms, Dasein, "Being-in-the World" and the world is his responsibility and care. The poet perceives and articulates relations between things through metaphors which are at once discoveries and creations. Thus the poem and the scientific theory are fundamentally similar; they are operations which structure and explain the world. However,

these structures are neither permanent nor independent but the product of the interaction of mind and matter. Turning to Piaget, we discover, in his theory of genetic epistemology that

> There is no structure apart from construction, either abstract or genetic ...
> The idea of a formal system of abstract structures is thereby transformed into that of the construction of a never completed whole, the limits of formalisation constituting the grounds for incompleteness, or, as we put it earlier, incompleteness being a necessary consequence of the fact that there is no "terminal" or "absolute" form because any content is form relative to some inferior content and any form the content for some higher form. [4]

The evolutionary aspect of this theory of incompleteness bears comparison with Whitehead's action of the lure of creativity through which every completed event becomes potential content for a new form or concrescence.

In the philosophy of evolutionary organism consciousness is conceived as a characteristic of higher organisms which has reached its furthest development in man. At the same time, consciousness must always be consciousness of something; of necessity, it carries its world along with it. Thus it does not even make sense to separate consciousness from the physical world or to argue whether structure proceeds from the world or from mind. Structure is a product of mind and the world. It is, in Aristotle's words, [5] "the arrangement of the incidents".

The poem which articulates consciousness in language is thus both historical event and the discovery of myth. It has objective reality as do the relations and metaphors contained within it. However, the degree of that reality, the degree of the poem's truth lies not in its correspondence to some external and immutable absolute truth, but in its capacity to satisfy, its adequacy to the present moment. However, this criterion is not simply the criterion of the poem but also of the scientific theory.

So when in Robert Duncan's poetry connections and metaphors are established through puns and through the

poet's allowing the sound of words to carry him on, these relations are no less real nor less valid than those established through visual or semantic images. Even in Gunslinger where many of the connections and perceptions may escape us, we cannot deny the poem's reality as a product of consciousness. We may however find it adequate in its capacity to satisfy our sense of our own present reality.

When we considered the traditional function of epic we saw it as concerned with myth and history. We saw it as having a public and social significance as it rehersed the history of its people in order to reinforce their myth. Epic served to confirm a people in their activity and to project the pattern of their future activity. The problem with this reinforcement of myth may be compared with one of the disadvantages of many theories of structuralism. They assume an underlying, changing order, in the case of epic, a static society. Such a view sits oddly with a metaphysics of process, yet its attractions, particularly in the poetry of Robert Duncan, are clear. However, Piaget's notion of structure as evolutionary may again prove useful.

The poem attempts to articulate the structure of reality, but that reality is the reality of the present, different from, more than the past. Therefore, the structure which the poet will discover or create will be different from any other structure although it will draw on previous structures. The intensity of satisfaction of the poem will depend on its capacity to include or prehend and organise previous structures or forms. Moreover, in the degree to which it succeeds in articulating the present so will it increase the possibility of the future.

It must be emphasised that this is not a claim that mind is all-powerful, or that man can through hiswill create whatever world he desires. That would be a reversion to arrant idealism. The future is not predictable, or not certainly predictable. We only have probabilities. But what the poet can do is recognise the world, respond to it,

be "equal to the real itself". As the world's consciousness, man is responsible for the world. The completion of the Mystical Body, the reunification of the Logos, may be the creative lure for the poem and the world but the actual union of word and world occurs only in the present moment. The intensification of that form is the task of the poet.

FOOTNOTES TO CONCLUSION

[1] See above, p.69.

[2] Olson and Tallman, p.149.

[3] Gary Zukav, The Dancing Wu Li Masters (London, 1979) p.136.

[4] Jean Piaget, Structuralism translated and edited by Chaninah Maschler (London, 1971) p.140.

[5] See above, p. 8 .

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